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ABSTRACT

Examples of hate crimes against Arab Americans in this report are those that were reported to the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), but the actual number of hate crimes and incidents of discrimination far exceeds those reported. As the report shows, Arab American civil rights were increasingly threatened in 1996-97 by the Anti-Terrorism Act, which allows the use of secret evidence against individuals accused of supporting terrorist organizations. The airport profiling system of the Federal Aviation Administration and new immigration laws also threaten the civil rights of Arab Americans. Case summaries in this report include 22 hate crime instances, 55 cases of discrimination on the job, 30 cases of harassment at airports, and 22 cases of discrimination by local or federal government agencies. These sample the types of complaints received, but do not reflect the actual number of complaints. The ADC has also received numerous complaints of discriminatory attitudes by teachers, bias in textbooks, and disparate treatment of Arab American and Muslim students. (See especially Section 5: "Education and Textbooks" (p.45-47)). Instances of biased curricula and discriminatory attitudes by teachers can be found at a variety of levels within the educational system. The challenge for educators is to include Arab Americans in their multicultural perspective and to teach about Arab culture and Islam as an integral part of world civilization. (SLD)

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1996-97 REPORT ON HATE CRIMES AGAINST ARAB AMERICANS

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American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

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American-Arab
Anti-Discrimination Committee
4201 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: (202) 244-2990
Fax: (202) 244-3196
E-mail: adc@adc.org
http://www.adc.org

Naila Asali
Chairperson

Hala Maksoud
President

Researched by:
Randa Kayyali
Consultant

Editing & layout by:
Ghada Khouri
Director of Publications

ADC staff members Sam Husseini, Houeida Saad, and Marvin Wingfield contributed to this report. Intern Renee Nassif also provided some assistance.

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee is a civil rights organization committed to defending the rights of Arab Americans and promoting their heritage. ADC, which is non-partisan and non-sectarian, is the largest Arab-American grassroots organization in the United States. It was founded in 1980 by U.S. Senator James G. Abourezk in response to stereotyping, defamation and discrimination directed against Americans of Arab origin.

ADC serves its nationwide membership through direct advocacy in cases of defamation and through legal action in cases of discrimination.

The ADC Research Institute publishes information on issues of concern to Arab Americans and provides educational materials on Arab history and culture, and on the ethnic experience of Arabs in America. It also sponsors internships for college students.

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1996-97 Report on

Hate Crimes & Discrimination Against Arab Americans

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

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I. RESEARCH GOALS & METHODS

In light of the White House Initiative on Race, a campaign recently launched by President Bill Clinton to reduce racial tensions, this report is a contribution to the national debate on hate crimes and discrimination. It provides an alarming look at the incidence of hate crimes and discrimination perpetrated against the Arab-American community in 1996 and 1997.

Hate crimes against any race, ethnicity or religion are notoriously under-reported and the Arab-American community is no exception. The examples in this report are those which were reported to the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) and can only provide a sample illustration of the range of discrimination and hate crimes committed against Arab Americans. It is important to keep in mind that ADC is able to document only a small number of cases of anti-Arab discrimination, as not all instances are reported to ADC, while some of the instances which were reported were difficult to verify.

It is widely recognized that official crime statistics seriously under-report the extent of crime in general. Research indicates that hate crimes are at least twice as likely to go unreported as non-bias crimes. Perhaps as few as three to 13 percent of hate crimes are reported (Gregory Herek, Roy Gillis, and Jeanine Cogan, Psychological Correlates of Hate Crimes, forthcoming; Edward Dunbar, presentation at a conference of the American Psychological Association, August 1997).

As this report documents, Arab-American civil rights were increasingly threatened in the past year by: 1) the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1996 which allows the use of secret evidence against individuals accused of supporting 'terrorist' organizations; 2) the airport 'profiling' system mandated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which has led to the selective targeting of Arab and Arab-American travelers; and 3) the new immigration laws recently passed by Congress which severely restrict the flow of immigrants and allows the use of secret evidence in deportation or exclusion proceedings.

The case summaries contained in this report include 22 hate crime instances; 55 cases of discrimination on the job or in the corporate world; 30 cases of harassment at airports; and 22 cases of discrimination by local or federal government agencies. The case summaries outlined in this report are merely a sample of the ***types*** of discrimination complaints received by ADC but does not reflect the ***actual number*** of complaints received.

The cases cited herein are based on data from a variety of sources, including signed affidavits, reports from ADC chapters and activists, and individual complaints. Whenever complaints could not be verified or documented, they were omitted from this report. In most cases, the names of the victims were withheld to protect their privacy.

II. INTRODUCTION

The Political & Cultural Context of Anti-Arab Discrimination

Hate crimes, discrimination, and defamation of Arab Americans are widespread and permeate the workplace, the service industry, the media, the schools, and federal agencies. The last two years saw the institutionalization of policies which adversely impact the Arab-American community, thus compounding the problem of anti-Arab discrimination. These policies were generally adopted as a result of high-profile tragedies, such as the Oklahoma City bombing and the TWA Flight 800 crash. Although these crises were not Arab-related, Arab Americans find themselves convenient scapegoats in the rush to pass legislation designed to allay the public's fears, regardless of the fact that such legislation essentially discriminates.

Many Arab-American problems are tied to major U.S. policy issues — i.e. U.S. Middle East policy, the Arab-Israeli conflict, concerns about international terrorism, and current immigration debates. A direct correlation can be found between times of national crisis and the incidence of anti-Arab hate crimes and discrimination. Indeed, there was a significant surge in anti-Arab hate crimes following the U.S. bombing of Libya in the 1980's, as well as during the 1991 Gulf War and in the immediate aftermath of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing.

Law enforcement agencies, the media, politicians, and terrorism "experts" have repeatedly rushed to lay blame for national tragedies on Arabs and Muslims, with little regard for the dangerous repercussions of such speculations on the Arab-American community. As a result, at a time when the White House is conducting a highly visible Presidential initiative on racial reconciliation, federal agencies are simultaneously implementing anti-terrorism and immigration policies which undermine civil rights and constitutional protections for Arab Americans and Muslims, Arabs visiting the United States, political refugees, and other immigrants.

Discriminatory policies by official agencies have the effect of legitimizing anti-Arab attitudes and encouraging bigotry against the Arab-American community. This climate of hostility, which is compounded by the rampant anti-Arab stereotypes perpetuated in the media, can only encourage hate crimes and discrimination against Arab Americans.

Despite the flagrant problem of anti-Arab discrimination, the Arab-American community has been largely ignored in the public discourse on race and ethnicity. This is due in large part to the fact that Arab Americans are not recognized as a distinct ethnic group, and thus do not have a separate designation in the U.S. Census, which currently lists them as 'White' or 'Other.' As a result, little data is collected on their unique experience as an ethnic group numbering more than 3 million people throughout the United States. ADC continues to call on the Federal Office of Management and Budget to add a separate Arab-American designation to the system of racial and ethnic categories used by federal and local agencies, schools, and other institutions, for the purposes of collecting data on Arab Americans. Only with such information readily available can the needs and problems of the Arab-American community be properly assessed.

In the meantime, there is an imperative need to include Arab Americans in the national debate on racial issues as their experience with discrimination parallels that of most ethnic, religious, or racial minorities throughout American history. The problems that African Americans and Native Americans in particular have faced are of unique scope by reason of the historical experience of slavery, conquest and brutality in earlier generations. However, anti-Arab discrimination is not rooted in history, but in current events. Indeed, it is an emerging and growing problem largely shaped by political events in the Middle East, U.S. Mideast policy, and the prevalence of anti-Arab images in the U.S. media and popular culture.

III. HATE CRIMES

1. Definition & Data Collection:

The FBI defines a hate crime as:

> A criminal offense committed against a person or property which is motivated, in whole or in part, by the offender's bias against a race, religion, ethnic/national origin group, or sexual orientation group (Training Guide for Hate Crime Data Collection, 1991).

Hate crimes are collected by FBI offices and local police departments around the country and then published by the U.S. Department of Justice in a Uniform Crime Report on Hate Crimes. (The latest published figures are on 1995 hate crimes.) The statistics thus collected document the number of incidents, offenses, victims and offenders. Incidents are categorized by the race, religion or sexual orientation of the victim, as well as by the race of the perpetrator, if known. The Department of Justice's statistics are the authoritative source for information on hate crimes at the national level and are used by many social commentators and academics to analyze the ethnic and racial tensions prevalent in contemporary American society.

However, these important and authoritative statistics do not include a category for Arab Americans as they fall into the "White" or the "Other" ethnic and racial categories used by federal and local agencies. The absence of an "anti-Arab" bias motivation category means that anti-Arab incidents will not be identified and documented by law enforcement officials. ***Without recognized and published documentation, it seems as if there are no hate crimes against Arab Americans.*** When no Arab-American category exists, policy-makers, academics and social commentators *can* routinely ignore the hate crimes committed against the Arab-American community.

Law enforcement agencies do, however, document hate crimes on the basis of religion. Within the religious category, the FBI and the Department of Justice statistics have an "anti-Islamic" category for bias motivation. Even so, there seems to be a gross undercounting of anti-Muslim hate crimes. For instance, in 1995, more than 200 anti-Muslim hate crimes were reported to the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) in the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing. However, the FBI reported that there were only 29 anti-Muslim hate crimes for the whole year of 1995. Based on these figures, FBI statistics omit seven out of eight anti-Muslim hate crimes.

While the anti-Muslim category is a step in the right direction, a separate Arab category is necessary to document hate crimes motivated by anti-Arab sentiment. Contrary to popular opinion, Arab and Muslim are *not* interchangeable terms. Not all Muslims are Arabs; and not all Arabs are Muslim. In fact, Arabs are a minority in the Muslim world, and a substantial minority of Arabs is Christian. Arab-American community leaders have estimated that approximately half of the Arab-American population is Christian. Regardless of their religious affiliation, Arab Americans suffer from ethnically-motivated discrimination and hate crimes. Some attacks are even directed against non-Arabs, but are motivated by anti-Arab hostility, as when non-Arab supporters of

Palestinian rights are targeted for their political and human rights activities. Yet, such incidents are not properly classified due to the absence of an "anti-Arab" bias motivation category.

ADC is the only organization in the United States which collects information on anti-Arab discrimination and hate crimes. There is an imperative need for local and national agencies to systematically document the frequency of hate crimes against Arab Americans in order to formulate effective solutions to this growing problem.

a) Case Summaries:

Below are examples of hate crimes and harassment incidents reported to local ADC chapters and to the ADC National Office in Washington, D.C. They are listed in chronological order and include the type of crime committed, as well as the date and place where it took place. The following list of cases is a severe undercount of the overall number of hate crimes committed against Arab Americans throughout the country, as few cases are typically reported to ADC.

- **Assault and Battery**

1/3/96 - Fairfax, VA

A 16 year-old Arab-American boy was verbally and physically assaulted by a 32-year-old white male body builder employed at Henry's Wrecker Service. As the attack was taking place, the attacker hurled racist comments at the boy and his father, the least offensive of which was "dirty Arab." The Arab-American teenager suffered severe injuries, including a broken arm. He has become seriously withdrawn since the incident.

- **Harassment**

5/96 - Denver, Colorado

Three disc jockeys from KBPI, a local radio station, invaded the Colorado Islamic Center during prayer one morning. They entered wearing shoes and playing the national anthem on a trumpet and a bugle. (Wearing shoes inside a mosque is forbidden as it is believed to soil the sanctity of the institution by bringing pieces of the outside world inside.) One of the DJ's was wearing a turban and a T-shirt with the picture of a Muslim basketball player who had refused to stand up for the national anthem. The mosque now has to be locked except during times of prayer.

- **Hate Mail**

5/96 - Poughkeepsie, NY

An Arab-American man wrote a "Letter to the Editor" to a local paper criticizing the Israeli shelling of a UN refugee compound in Qana, Lebanon, which killed over 100 civilians. In response to his letter, the Arab-American man received hate mail, including a letter from an individual using the name of "Walter J. O'Brien" and purporting to be a lawyer. In this letter, the lawyer claimed that his law firm was retained by "an anonymous organization" and advised the Arab-American man to cooperate for his own good. The phony lawyer threatened to refer the author's name to the Attorney General "to investigate whether you participate actively in hate crimes or just spout venom in the newspapers." The author of this hate mail violated both Texas state law for posing as an attorney and federal law for mail fraud. Suspecting that the letter was not written by an attorney, the Arab-American man wrote a letter back to the "lawyer," reminding him of the U.S. Constitution and the right to freedom of speech. (ADC found that the law firm on the letterhead did not exist, and that the individual who signed the letter was not registered with the Texas state bar.)

• **Threats**

6/7/96 - Decatur, IL

A European-American man and his wife reported that they have received repeated threats as a result of their political activities in support of Palestinian rights. After hosting a Palestinian speaker, they were told by an anonymous caller on the phone: "We will send your head to the Palestinians in a bag."

• **Fatal Shooting**

8/28/96 - Buffalo, NY

At around midnight, a Yemeni-American man was shot and killed by three youths in his grocery store following tense racial relations. The deceased man left behind a widow and four young children. That same week, another Arab store-keeper was injured during an attempted hold-up in a nearby area. The police and the authorities have done little to calm the tense situation in the Buffalo area. Since the store-keeper's funeral, racial tensions have escalated further due to the establishment of a Deli Task Force by the police, which targets Arab-American stores in the inner city and closes them down for code violations.

• **Arson**

9/96 - Yuba City, CA

A newly-built Arab-American mosque near completion was burned down in an act of arson. The mosque was already the place of worship for many Muslims in the area. They were forced to pray in an old garage or to travel to a distant city to worship.

• **Vandalism**

9/96 & 2/6/97 - Santa Ana, CA

The statue of Alex Odeh, an Arab-American peace activist, in front of the Santa Ana Public Library in California, was vandalized twice. Both times, the statue was found smeared with red paint. Odeh, who was ADC's West Coast Regional Director, was assassinated in a terrorist attack in 1985. His murder is still unsolved, but the FBI identified three suspects, all of whom are believed to be connected with the Jewish Defense League (JDL). After the second vandalism incident, the Chairman of the JDL, Irv Rubin, wrote a venomous article on the JDL Internet webpage that concluded with the statement: "[P]erhaps the most appropriate response to the Odeh statue is made daily by the pigeon population of Santa Ana. So, if you're ever in the area, be sure to stop by the library, and don't forget to bring plenty of birdseed." Odeh's widow and three children were shaken by both vandalism incidents.

• **Fatal Shooting**

11/4/96 - Rocky Mount, NC

A 13-year-old Arab-American teenager died from a gunshot wound he suffered after being attacked while helping his father close the family store. He was shot by an African-American man who had made racial comments against the deceased prior to his murder. Local law enforcement officials had done little to calm existing ethnic tensions prior to the tragedy. The State of North Carolina then reduced the attacker's charge from murder in the first degree to manslaughter, which carries a substantially lighter prison sentence.

• **Verbal Harassment & Physical Assault**

2/97 - North Carolina

On numerous occasions, two Arab-American women were verbally and physically abused by a white man and his sister. The man, who was a neighbor to one of the women, once screamed, "Get

out, Arabs, move. Get the f*** out. I [will] kill you, bitch." He also repeatedly pounded on the wall between their apartments until pictures and mirrors belonging to the Arab-American woman fell off the wall and broke. During one of the worst episodes of verbal assault, the man became physically aggressive and punched one of the women in her left eye. The police were called several times, and did nothing but give the *victim* a citation for attempting to defend herself with a baseball bat. Exasperated, the Arab-American woman and her husband eventually moved out of their home to another apartment.

- **Harassment**

2/5/97 - Tulsa, OK

Between 20 and 40 students from Oral Roberts University, a right-wing Christian college, stood outside the Islamic Center of Tulsa during prayer, mistakenly thinking that it was *Lailat al-Qadr*, the anniversary of the night when Muslims believe the Prophet Muhammad first began receiving revelations from God. The caretaker, alarmed by the voices he heard outside, went to investigate. He found the students with their hands placed on the walls and the doors of the mosque claiming that they wanted to "pray for" the Muslims inside. A witness called the police. The students agreed to heed the police's request to leave the scene, but only after finding out that *Lailat al-Qadr* was on another night.

- **Hate Mail**

2/6/97 - Cyberspace

Arab World Online received a hate letter filled with racial epithets and threats such as: "We will bomb you back to the stone age which isn't too far back for most of you." The author of the hate e-mail wrote: "We will give up the Golan [Heights] when you pry our cold dead fingers off of the nuclear weapons we will launch on all your cities and oil fields before we go down." He also called Arabs "all of you sons of camel s**t" and defamed Islam, Mohammed and the Quran. The message was signed: "From the freedom loving people of Israel, the U.S."

- **Murder**

5/97 - Brooklyn, NY

A Jordanian immigrant was allegedly killed by his landlord in a tenant dispute. The landlord had allegedly expressed hatred toward immigrants and had discriminated against the deceased and his wife through words and actions. Prior to the murder, the landlord refused to fix broken plumbing, telling his tenants that they did not understand their legal rights. He allegedly murdered the Lebanese man after a dispute, stuffed his body in a bag, and buried him an hour away from the crime scene. The landlord, returning home covered with blood and dirt, was immediately arrested upon entering the building. He was indicted for second-degree murder. The Queens County District Attorney was considering decreasing the charge from second-degree murder to manslaughter when ADC requested a full prosecution of the defendant on all seven indictment charges. Charges against the alleged murderer are pending.

- **Verbal Harassment & Physical Assault**

5/97 - Anaheim, CA

A young Arab-American boy was the target of repeated racial epithets for months at school and then was beaten by fellow students. He suffered broken bones and lacerations to his face, requiring stitches. The school administration did nothing to prevent the hate crime prior to the physical assault.

• **Threats**
5/7/97 - Nationwide
A number of mosques around the country received the same letter from the United Kingdom that included threats to "your mosques, your families, your leaders." This letter allegedly came from the Jewish Defense League and Kahane Chai, both violently anti-Arab and anti-Muslim groups. The threatening letters included the following statement: "Our units are already in place and trained... be warned Muslims, your lives are ours, like the sheep to the butcher."

• **Assault & Theft**
5/7/97 - Detroit, MI
A Mobil gas station owned by an Arab-American man was the focus of racial tensions. Six African-American youths entered the mini-mart and allegedly shoplifted some items, broke glass bottles, used racial slurs, and then physically attacked the cashier. The assailants have not been brought to justice and the owner of the station is offering a $5,000 reward for their arrest.

• **Vandalism & Attempted Arson**
6/97 - Omaha, NE
A family returned from a holiday trip to find their house vandalized with swastikas and racial slurs, which were painted on the inside walls of the home. The family decided to go to a hotel until they could paint over the graffiti on the interior walls. When they returned home again, they found evidence of arson. By chance, a lack of oxygen had caused the arsonist's flame to extinguish itself and the house was saved.

• **Hate Mail**
7/27/97 - Cyberspace
ADC received an e-mail message from a man who signed himself off as "a hated Jew" and wrote: "You murder, butcher and torture in the name of Islam...You HATE Jews and butcher women's genitals. It's not us that has the problem..."

• **Vandalism**
8/4/97 - Gaithersburg, MD
A broken bottle and macaroni were strewn across the backyard of the house of a prominent Arab-American woman activist. The perpetrators had also attempted to smash the back window of her home. This incident followed a bomb explosion in Jerusalem a day earlier. The family has experienced a series of incidents since the Gulf War. The Arab-American woman called the police who recorded the family's history of harassment and took the bottle fragments away for fingerprints. The incident is being investigated as a hate crime.

• **Hate Mail**
8/14/97 - Cyberspace
A man, who had requested to be placed on ADC's e-mail list, wrote: "Take me off your mailing list you filthy bastards. I hope you burn in hell".

• **Vandalism**
9/4/97 - Gaithersburg, MD
The same Arab-American woman activist mentioned above and her family were the victims of hate crimes for the fifth time in three years. Outside her home, two family cars were broken into, the seats slashed and the tires punctured or deflated. The word "pig" and swastikas were scratched into the paint of the cars. The Arab-American woman called the police who came to the scene and

copied fingerprints left on the cars. Arab community leaders and the police chief met to discuss the series incidents against this family — all of which are being investigated as hate crimes.

- **Hate Mail**

9/13/97 - Cyberspace

ADC received an e-mail message entitled, "Islam kills," which began with the statement: "Just in case you are all historically illiterate, Mohammed lied to the people of Mecca and then returned to slaughter them all."

- **Harassment and Threats**

10/5/97 - Rockville, MD

An Arab-American family has been allegedly harassed, threatened and verbally abused by a neighbor since April 1996. The neighbor and her two children allegedly destroyed the Arab-American family's garden, vandalized and trespassed on their property, parked in their assigned space, shot air guns at their car, jumped on their car and deflated the tires. In September 1997, the neighbors allegedly slammed their car into the Arab-American family's car several times. The neighbor also allegedly threatened to break the Arab-American children's legs, kill their daughter, and plant drugs in the house. The neighbor verbally abused the family and allegedly made statements such as: "You Arabs do not belong here" and "I'll destroy you until you leave the country." The Arab-American family has made numerous complaints about their neighbor to the home-owner's association and the police department. It also sought mediation, which was rejected by the neighbor. The family has since filed a civil rights violation with the FBI. The case is pending.

IV. DISCRIMINATION

1. The Workplace

The image of the "terrorist," the "sand nigger," or the "backward Muslim" perpetrated in the media and popular culture often haunts Arab Americans on the job, especially when such stereotypes and biases are held by their co-workers and supervisors. Discrimination in the workplace takes a variety of forms, including the denial of employment or promotions; disparate treatment of employees; denial of the right to practice one's religion; and termination based on an employee's national, ethnic, or religious background.

In recent years, the number of discrimination complaints by Muslim women who wear the *hijab*, or head cover, have increased. Muslim women who wear a head cover are particularly vulnerable to job discrimination because their religious practice makes them conspicuous. However, not all cases of job discrimination are religion-based as many Arab Americans suffer disparate treatment based on their national origin, ethnicity, or their political beliefs.

Under basic state and federal laws and agencies dealing with discrimination, including the Civil Rights Act and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), it is illegal for employers to discriminate against an employee or job applicant based on national origin, race, religion, gender or ethnicity.

a) Case Summaries:

ADC's Legal Department receives approximately 30 complaints of discrimination on the job on a weekly basis. The following cases are only a small sample of the total number of complaints. They were chosen because they portray situations typically encountered by Arab-American victims of discrimination and because these particular cases were thoroughly verified and documented. After reviewing complaints, the Legal Department sometimes offers legal advice and files class action suits. Most cases are referred to outside attorneys for further advice and possible prosecution. Some of the following cases are informal complaints that may be litigated at a later point if not amicably resolved out of court. A few cases have been adjudicated and settled in favor of the Arab-American employee.

- **Harassment/Hate Mail**

1/96 - Boston, MA

An Arab-American dispatcher for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) filed a second discrimination complaint. His first complaint and a subsequent investigatory hearing did not stop the alleged harassment and abusive treatment he suffered at his workplace. The Arab-American man alleged that he was called a "sand nigger," "Achmed," "camel jockey," "Rahi-ne," and other ethnic slurs by co-workers. The supervisors allegedly joined in the name-calling in front of the whole office. He also allegedly received three pieces of hate mail

containing racist comments. Daily log entries at his workplace include racist statements by a fellow dispatcher who has not been disciplined. The Arab-American man alleged that a double-standard applies in disciplinary actions at the MBTA. His case is pending.

- **Harassment/Termination**

6/24/96 - Rhode Island

An Arab-American lab technician of Syrian descent alleged that he was discriminated against and then fired on the basis of his national origin. At first, the technician's co-workers at the Rhode Island Medical Center made ethnic slurs about his Arab heritage. When the lab technician complained about the situation to management, he was fired. The Commission for Human Rights in Rhode Island took the Arab American's case and filed charges with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

- **Termination**

9/15/96 - Bellevue, WA

The assistant manager at a local dry-cleaners' told an Arab-American female employee that she could not greet customers with a *hijab* on and had to remove it. She refused and was transferred to the back of the store. Two weeks later, she was denied a customary salary raise. After the Arab-American woman complained of discrimination on the basis of religion, she was fired and the owner of the business asked her not to enter the building again. A suit is pending.

- **Termination**

10/96 - McLean, VA

JC Penney allegedly fired a woman because she refused to remove her *hijab*. According to the Arab-American woman, the manager told her: "You have to make a decision whether or not you want to keep this job.You take off your scarf or leave." He then asked her to "clock out now" upon her refusal to remove her head scarf for religious reasons.

- **Termination**

11/96 - Enfield, CT

At a Bradlees store, an Arab-American woman was told that her *hijab* violated company dress code. She was allegedly fired for refusing her supervisor's order to remove the scarf.

- **Termination**

11/96 - Sugarland, TX

An employee at an OfficeMax store was allegedly told not to return to work because her *hijab* violated work rules.

- **Termination**

12/96 - Turlock, CA

An Arab-American woman was allegedly fired from Walmart during a conversation in which her immediate boss asked about her national origins and reported that she had received a complaint about her "body odor." Ironically, just days before, the woman had received outstanding evaluations, and was not told about any issues with the quality of her work. Although the employer is legally obligated to give an employee the opportunity to remedy any problem before terminating the worker, no such opportunity was given. After the ADC Legal Department intervened, the Arab-American woman was reinstated and given a permanent, full-time position at the Walmart store.

• **Denial of Promotion**
1/3/97 - Detroit, MI
Detroit Edison, an energy company, settled out of court with an Arab-American male worker for an undisclosed amount. He was allegedly denied promotions due to his ethnicity. His concerns about discrimination had been ignored in the company's prolonged grievance process. Since the settlement, the company has created a Middle-Eastern American Forum, an Ethnic Marketing Department, and a Diversity Action Council. The company also adopted diversity objectives which may bring more employment opportunities to Arab Americans.

• **Denial of Promotion**
1/27/97 - Dearborn, MI
An Arab-American engineer employed at the Ford Motor Company reported being discriminated against by his direct manager due to his Arab background. The engineer was denied performance and promotion opportunities for the last seven years despite positive work reports and a good rapport with fellow colleagues. He felt that his direct manager wanted him to leave his department and the company altogether. The manager allegedly transferred the Arab-American employee to another department without his consent. The employee has filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

• **Denial of Lease**
2/97 - New Jersey
An Arab-American businessman was refused the continuation of his lease by the local Farmers' Market, while other businesses were allowed to extend theirs. The Farmers' Market also allegedly refused approval of the sale of his business to another Arab American. Being self-employed, this lease was crucial for the success of his business. The Arab-American man believes that the Farmer's Market Association discriminated against him based on his ethnic background.

• **Denial of Promotion**
2/97 - Detroit, MI
An Arab-American man complained that Ford Motor Company refused him promotional opportunities. The employee filed an Equal Employment Opportunity complaint against Ford for ethnic discrimination. This was the second complaint in a year regarding discriminatory practices at Ford.

• **Denial of Promotion/Harassment**
2/10/97 - Houston, TX
A 44-year-old Arab-American man was passed over for promotion and fired after working for a social services business for four and a half years. He alleges that he was discriminated against on the basis of ethnic origin and religion. He was asked twice by the Executive Director: "Are you an Arab?" and called "you Arab bastard."

• **Harassment**
3/97 - New York, NY
An Arab-American man employed by a nationally-known magazine was approached at work and told that there was a "problem" with an Arab-American organization listed on his resume. He had affiliations with Arab-American groups and organizations around the country, which was reflected in his resume. He was then questioned at length by his superiors about his past employment with the Arab-American organization. The man still works for the magazine.

• **Termination**
4/97 - Wisconsin
An Arab-American woman was reportedly fired from Marshall Fields because she refused to remove her *hijab*.

• **Denial of promotion**
4/1/97 - Philadelphia, PA
An Arab-American professor was denied tenure at Temple University despite many positive reviews of his work and a number of published articles on his research. The professor had received an overwhelming positive vote at the departmental level and a positive recommendation from the Council of Deans. The local ADC chapter and the ADC National Office sent letters about this and past cases of discrimination at Temple University against Arab Americans. The Provost and Dean replied that he has taken "a strong leadership position regarding intolerance and prejudice" and included an inter-office memorandum in which he emphasized the need for tolerance and understanding of cultural diversity at the university.

• **Termination**
4/1/97 - San Francisco, CA
A California court awarded an Arab-American man $2.9 million in damages due to workplace discrimination at United Airlines. The jury found that United Airlines had subjected the employee to a hostile working environment because of his national origin (Jordan) and his religion (Islam). The Arab-American man alleged that he was given discriminatory work assignments, having to clean airplane lavatories far more often than his co-workers and in excess of appropriate scheduling. He also alleged that his co-workers made derogatory comments about his Arab heritage and Islam, using abusive and profane language. One co-worker told him that he fit the profile of a "terrorist" and others joked about his name, saying that it was like an "Aladdin character." After the Arab-American man reported the discriminatory treatment by his co-workers to his supervisor, nothing was done to remedy the hostile and offensive work environment. Instead, he was fired for allegedly consuming alcohol while on duty and stealing a wine bottle which was company property. The Arab-American man is a practicing Muslim and does not drink alcohol. The jury described the reasons for his termination as a "cover-up" before ruling in his favor.

• **Termination**
4/97 - Sacramento, CA
At a McDonald's branch, a manager told an Arab-American worker to "either shave your beard or you can't work here anymore." The man was later fired because he refused to shave his beard for religious reasons, although he kept it well-groomed and trimmed.)Some Muslim men feel that beards are an integral part of Islam.)

• **Termination/Harassment**
4/14/97 - Silver Spring, MD
An Arab-American man who was fired from an engineering firm alleged that he was discriminated against on the basis of his religion (Islam) and national origin (Syrian). Throughout his employment, he felt that he was singled out for criticism on a regular basis despite working hard, attending training courses, keeping up-to-date in his field of study, and never missing a day of work. He alleged that his superiors deliberately intimidated and berated him in front of his co-workers. He also alleged that his superiors pretended not to understand his accent and consistently gave unfounded criticisms of his work in performance evaluations.

• **Denial of Promotion**
5/97 - Detroit, MI
Three Arab-American professors filed suit against Wayne State University for discrimination on the basis of race, according to *The Detroit News* (5/29/97, p. 10C). One Arab-American professor alleged discrimination by his Department Chair, who is Jewish. He was denied tenure and felt that he was held to a higher standard than his non-Arab counterparts. Another Arab-American professor has a case pending against the university for discrimination based on national origin and religious beliefs. He claims that he was denied fair consideration for tenure — a complaint which was supported by a grievance arbitrator. A third Arab-American professor alleges that he was paid less than other part-time faculty, denied a full-time teaching post, and was discriminated against because of his national origin. All cases are pending.

• **Denial of Job**
5/26/97 - Reedsville, SC
An Arab-American man with two Master's degrees — and an accent — called for information about an engineering job. He was told the job had been filled. Something aroused his suspicion, so his wife also called. She has no accent and was told that the job was still open. "They heard my voice and everything changed," he said.

• **Demotion**
6/97 - North Carolina
A flight attendant with U.S. Airways was placed on personal leave, and then placed in a non-flying position with the airline because she refused to remove her *hijab*. The airline's attorney is quoted as saying that the *hijab* will put the carrier at a "marketing disadvantage" and that it is "not expected by our customers." The attorney also stated: "It is somewhat offensive to me as a woman that you [Muslims] require women to cover their head and neck." In a second U.S. Airways case, a Muslim ground crew employee was also told not to wear the *hijab*. Both employees have received support from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

• **Denial of Promotion/Harassment**
6/17/97 - Fairfax, VA
A 44-year-old Arab-American civilian employee alleged discrimination on the basis of national origin at the Department of Defense. He alleged that the discrimination began in 1995 when his supervisor said: "We should round up all the stinking Arabs in this country and send them back to the desert... Kawa Bunga." The Arab American alleged that since then, he was consistently denied performance and promotion opportunities that were available to other employees who were less qualified than him, but who did not share his national origin. The Arab American filed an Equal Employment Opportunity complaint with the Department of Defense. He was subsequently terminated, citing reasons other than his ethnicity.

• **Termination/Harassment**
7/28/97 - Fairfield, CA
An Arab-American security officer who was fired from a shopping mall complained of employment discrimination based on his national origin. The Arab American was allegedly told by his supervisor that he believed that Middle Eastern men tended to be rude and looked down on women. The supervisor allegedly told the Arab American that he was "rude" but unaware of his rudeness, because he was "brought up that way." On another occasion, the supervisor allegedly told the security officer that he was rude because of his "culture." In a third meeting, the supervisor told the Arab American that he was a liar. When the officer refuted the charge, his supervisor

replied that he should "get the hint," and then suspended him. The Arab American maintained that he had a good rapport with everyone else and had consistently behaved in a professional manner. Since the Arab-American man was fired, his former supervisor has been giving him bad references and has made it difficult for him to find another job.

- **Termination/Harassment**

7/31/97 - Charlottesville, VA

An Arab-American medical resident at the University of Virginia (UVA) Medical Center did not have his contract renewed because his superiors believed he had "poor performance" as a resident. He is the first Muslim and minority in the UVA Medical residency program in its 110-year history. He alleged that a professor sent him a Bible and tried to convert him to Christianity, both inside and outside the workplace. The Arab-American man felt that the work environment was hostile to non-Christians and alleged that a senior resident called him a "Muslim desert nigger." He submitted more than 2,000 notes on and by patients confirming the high quality of his work to the Residence Grievance Committee. The Committee came to a unanimous decision that the Arab-American medical resident was not subject to racial or religious discrimination. The intern was dismissed from his program, an action which put his status as a medical resident in jeopardy. The physician filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

2. The Corporate World

Discrimination against Arab Americans is not confined to the workplace, but to the service industry and the corporate world as well. Most of the cases cited in this section reflect how the cultural biases and stereotypes held by members of the service industry can translate into outright acts of discrimination. Some of the examples cited here have been remedied, either through litigation or arbitration. Other cases are still pending.

a) Case Summaries:

- **Denial of Service**

12/4/96 - Detroit, MI

An Arab-American woman and her Arab-American friends were denied entry to Fourth Street Asylum, a dance club in Royal Oak. She alleged that the bouncer did not even look at their identification before refusing to let them in. The Arab-American woman witnessed a number of men and women with dark skin and black hair being turned away. She feels that she and other Arab Americans are consistently denied entry to the club due to their ethnic origins.

- **Denial of Service/Harassment**

1/1/97 - Liberty, OH

A group of Arab Americans were discriminated against and subjected to racist comments by the manager and security personnel at Holiday Inn hotel on New Year's Eve. At midnight, as everyone was standing on the chairs, ringing in the New Year, the table of Arab Americans was the only group in the room to be singled out and told to be seated by the hotel's security personnel. When the group continued to stand on the chairs, as most others were doing, the hotel manager came over and yelled: "Those f***ing Iranians, f***ing everything up."

• **Denial of Service**
3/21/97 - Baltimore, MD
A national life insurance company settled out of court for an undisclosed amount and rescinded its discriminatory policies which allegedly denied insurance coverage to non-U.S. citizens of Arab descent, including Arabs residing in the United States.

• **Denial of Service**
5/97 - Alexandria, VA
An Arab-American couple was allegedly refused a rental property by a real estate company because of the husband's Arabic name, his middle name being "Mohammed." At first, the rental agent expressed enthusiasm at signing a deal with the couple — until they filled out the paperwork. When the agent saw the husband's name, he became extremely cold toward the couple. He allegedly double-crossed both the owner of the house and the Arab-American couple. While he told the owners that something was wrong with the renter's application, he also told the couple that the house had already been rented out. The couple has retained counsel.

• **Denial of Service/Harassment**
5/4/97 - Detroit, MI
In a second incident of anti-Arab discrimination at the Fourth Street Asylum dance club, an off-duty Arab-American police officer was denied entry to the club, allegedly because of the Arabic name on his identification. The officer went to the club with friends of various ethnic backgrounds including an Irish American, an African American and other Arab Americans. The bouncer asked the mixed race group for their identifications at the door but only the Arab Americans were barred from entry. The manager said, "Those f***ing Arabs are not going in." The off-duty officer called the police. The manager claimed that the Arab Americans' identifications were not valid. When police officers replied that the identifications were in fact valid, the manager then stated that the group had caused problems before. The group of Arab Americans claimed they had never been to the club before. They subsequently filed a complaint at the police station. At a later date, the off-duty Arab-American police officer went to the club again with non-Arab friends. Once more, he was the only one refused entry. This time, the manager said: "Get the f*** out." A bouncer employed at the club later admitted to the off-duty police officer: "They discriminate like this against Arabs all the time." The Arab American is pressing charges against Fourth Street Asylum.

• **Denial of Service/Harassment**
8/5/97 - Cambridge, MA
UHAUL employees at the Central Square branch in Cambridge, Massachusetts, verbally harassed and refused service to two Arab-American males. After one of the men presented his name, address and credit card, the UHAUL employee told him that he could only take the van for five hours, instead of the usual 24-hour period. The assistant manager then intervened and told the two Arab Americans to leave the store and go back to their countries. One of the men stated that her comment would get her into trouble. The assistant manager then allegedly yelled: "What are you going to do? Blow up the store like you did to the Oklahoma building?" A case is pending.

• **Disparate Treatment**
8/17/97 - New York, NY
A Syrian restauranteur was discriminated against by his landlord on the basis of national origin. When the legal immigrant's lease expired, the Brodsky Organization increased the rent for the man's falafel restaurant by 150 per cent, thus bringing his rent to a level significantly higher than that paid by neighboring local stores. The organization's managing agent in New York has

allegedly made some discriminatory remarks about the restauranteur's national origins and heritage. Upon refusing to pay the new rent level, the man was evicted and his falafel stand was shut down. (*The New York Times*, 8/17/97, Section 13, p. 6)

V. INSTITUTIONALIZED DISCRIMINATION

1. Airline & Airport Harassment

In the past two years, hundreds of Arab Americans and Americans of Middle Eastern descent have complained of discrimination by the airlines at airports around the country. This surge in anti-Arab discrimination at airports is directly linked to the adoption of a passenger "profiling" system. Profiling, which is designed to select suspect individuals most likely to commit an act of terrorism, is essentially based on a stereotype.

Following the TWA Flight 800 crash, theories abounded about a terrorist bomb as the cause of the crash, and Arabs and Muslims became the targets of unfounded speculations. As in the case of Oklahoma City and the Atlanta Olympic bombings, this rush to judgment by the media, some officials, and terrorism "experts," proved erroneous. Nonetheless, the White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security chaired by Vice-President Al Gore instituted a "profiling" system of airline security which has a disparate impact on Arabs and Muslims. The policies recommended by the Gore Commission are now being implemented by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), as well as domestic and foreign airlines. These policies have resulted in the singling out and humiliation of Arabs and Arab-American travelers solely based on their national background and ethnicity.

The profiling of airline passengers is generally performed by airline personnel during check-in, as well as at the departure gate before boarding. When a traveler is selected, he or she is subjected to greater scrutiny than other passengers, including questioning, interrogation, and intrusive searches — most often item-by-item hand-searches conducted in public view.

Airlines claim confidentiality for not releasing profiling criteria. Neither the airlines nor the FAA take responsibility for the ethnic bias and discrimination involved in the profiling system. When a passenger complains to an airline that he or she was treated unfairly, the airlines typically respond that they are simply applying standards imposed by the FAA. In turn, the FAA contends that the airlines misinterpret and misapply their "non-biased" and "non-discriminatory" criteria for profiling. In the meantime, Arab-American victims of discrimination at airports find themselves with little recourse for action when the FAA and the airlines each deny responsibility for the negative impact of the profiling system.

Several airline manuals explicitly list ethnic traits in their profiling system. Specifically, they direct airline security and check-in personnel to profile passengers with Arabic names; passengers born in an Arab country; as well as passengers traveling to or from the Middle East. Although there may be additional criteria used in profiling, the presence of Middle East identifiers, such as Arab national origins and Arabic names, indicate that the profiling system is discriminatory.

Despite complaints by civil rights groups, the profiling system was recently expanded to include more domestic flights — a move advocated by the Gore Commission. Among its recommendations to improve air travel safety, the Commission called for the adoption of a Computerized Assisted Passenger Screening (CAPS) system, which is being developed by Northwest Airlines. CAPS will replace the current manual system which allows individual employee biases to affect security procedures.

The FAA and the airlines contend that the CAPS system will limit the personal discretion currently at the disposal of airline employees and security personnel in profiling passengers. However, passengers with Arabic names, places of birth or those traveling to the Middle East will continue to be targeted if carriers are not forced to implement non-discriminatory screening procedures in their manuals. CAPS is scheduled to be implemented at every major U.S. airport by the end of 1997.

a) Case Summaries:

Since the TWA Flight 800 crash in 1996, ADC has received hundreds of complaints of discrimination at airports by Arab and Arab-American travelers. The profiling of Arab Americans is systematic and very widespread. This report contains only a small sample of the incidents of airline harassment at airports in a one-year period spanning July 1996 to June 1997. ADC has collected extensive documentation of these practices and thorough descriptions of numerous incidents. The cases below are listed in chronological order.

- **El Al Airlines**

8/1/96 - Newark Airport

Traveling on Israel's national carrier, El Al Airlines, Laura Fadil, a Palestinian American, was scheduled to leave Newark Airport for Tel Aviv via London. Upon reaching the ticket counter, she was asked about the origin of her name. When she responded that her name was Arabic, she was interrogated for 50 minutes by the airline security agent, who told her "there might be a bomb in [her] luggage." Fadil offered to submit to a thorough search, but the agent refused, saying that Newark Airport lacked the proper equipment to screen her luggage. The agent then proceeded to ask her a series of personal questions, such as: Do you have Arab friends? How can you afford this ticket? Did you attend Sunday school?, etc. El Al denied Fadil service by refusing to let her board the plane. Instead, she was booked on a flight leaving the next day on a different airline. Fadil was flagrantly discriminated against based on her Arabic surname. Her case was discussed at length in *The Washington Post* (Op-Ed, 11/14/96; and Letters, 12/31/96).

- **British Airways**

8/10/96 - Pittsburgh International Airport

An elderly Syrian couple who were visiting their son in the United States on tourist visas were scheduled to return to Damascus via London out of Pittsburgh International Airport. At the check-in counter, they were told that their luggage had to be hand-searched by airport security. When they asked why they were being singled out, a British Airways representative told them that they met a "profile." The employee refused to elaborate or to let them speak to his supervisor, as they requested. Their luggage was placed on a table in the middle of the terminal in full public view and was searched item by item. The search lasted one hour, and they were forced to repack their bags without any help from security personnel.

• **Northwest Airlines**
8/26/96 - Frankfurt Airport
A U.S. citizen of Yemeni descent was traveling with her 14-year-old and 16-year-old sons from Yemen to Detroit via Frankfurt. At the check-in counter in Frankfurt, the Northwest Airlines attendant told them that they would have to step aside and wait until all the passengers had boarded the plane. They waited for half an hour, during which the attendant refused to give them any explanation as to why they were being singled out. In the meantime, their luggage was removed from the cargo area by a security officer, even though they had checked their bags directly from Yemen to Detroit. The officer told the Arab-American mother that he was following procedures established by Northwest Airlines in the United States. The 20-minute hand-search took place in plain view of the public in a room with a glass door and glass walls. The mother had packed incense and an incense-holder from Yemen. The security officer told her he wanted to take them. Fearing repercussions, she did not object to his demand. Once they had repacked their bags, another security officer entered the room and rudely ordered the bags to be re-opened. They explained that they had just been searched but the security officer ignored both comments by the Arab American and the first security guard, and proceeded to search the bags again for another 10 minutes.

• **El Al Airlines**
9/18/96 - JFK International Airport
A Jordanian citizen, who had spent a month in the United States visiting his brother, was scheduled to leave JFK International Airport for Tel Aviv and then continue on to his home in Amman, Jordan, via El Al Airlines. He was asked several personal questions at the airport terminal by an El Al agent regarding his visit to the United States, his brother, why he had chosen El Al Airlines, and so on. He was then escorted to a room with three security officers who interrogated him and searched his luggage, X-rayed various items such as shoe heels and vitamins, and then prevented him from keeping a hair dryer in his luggage. Two and a half hours later, the Jordanian man boarded his plane 10 minutes before departure. An El Al officer sat next to him on the flight from JFK to Tel Aviv and another officer escorted him from Tel Aviv to Amman. His brother called El Al Airlines to complain and was told by an El Al agent that the airline was known for its security measures and that he should have chosen another carrier.

• **Lufthansa Airlines**
10/11/96 - Dulles International Airport
Two U.S. citizens of Middle Eastern origin were picked out of the check-in line by security personnel at Dulles International Airport in Washington, D.C., as they were waiting for their Lufthansa flight to Syria. The airport security agent told them that they were picked based on their travel destination. However, they were the only ones profiled, even though the other passengers waiting in line were also going to Syria. Security personnel extensively searched their luggage for half an hour.

• **Lufthansa Airlines**
10/18/96 - Dulles International Airport
As he prepared to travel to Istanbul, Turkey, on Lufthansa Airlines out of Dulles Airport, a Libyan citizen and green card-holder was told by an airline agent that his luggage had to be searched. He clarified that he had no contact with Libya since he moved to the United States in 1983, but the agent responded that Lufthansa Airlines has a policy for searching the luggage of all Libyan, Iraqi, Sudanese, Cuban, and Iranian nationals. Airport security then hand-searched the passenger's checked-in luggage item by item in the terminal. His personal belongings were exposed to other

passengers without regard to his privacy. The man faced an identical experience a second time on December 5, 1996.

- **Northwest Airlines**

11/3/96 - Philadelphia Airport

A group of Arab-American friends were booked to travel from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Detroit on Northwest Airlines. As they were late, the group apologized to the Northwest employee at the ticket counter, who retorted: "You people are always late... We are not going to leave on time because of you people." Due to time constraints, the group requested to speak with a Northwest official upon their arrival in Detroit in order to register a complaint about the employee's remarks. In the meantime, the airline employee contacted Detroit Metro Airport claiming that the group had made threats and that one of them had thrown a chair at her, which was vehemently denied by all members of the group. Instead of a Northwest official, the Arab-American travelers were met by 10 Wayne County deputies at the door of the plane in Detroit Metropolitan Airport. Two of the passengers on the flight happened to be Wayne County police officers and corroborated the group's story. The deputies were satisfied with the account of events provided by the Arab-American group. The passengers then met with a Northwest official at the Detroit airport who stood by the behavior and actions of Northwest's Philadelphia agent.

- **El Al Airlines**

11/4/96

An Arab-American man was booked to fly on an El Al flight to Tel Aviv. An El Al security officer approached the man and asked him why he had come to the United States, with whom he stayed, where his sister and brother-in-law worked and what jobs they held. He was then escorted to the lower level offices of El Al along with his luggage, placed in a small room and questioned for two hours by five El Al security officers. Allowed only a few minutes to say good-bye to his family, the passenger was then escorted by two El Al security officers to the plane. His family reported that he looked so distraught when he departed that they worried about his physical and mental state.

- **Southwest Airlines**

11/24/96 - Providence Airport

A Palestinian-Canadian researcher with Human Rights Watch was scheduled to take a domestic flight on Southwest Airlines to Baltimore, Maryland, from Providence Airport in Rhode Island. Bright orange tags were secured to his luggage, both of which were carry-on pieces. When he asked why he was singled out from the other passengers, the Southwest airlines employee replied that the reasons were "secret." His luggage was X-rayed, after which airport personnel searched the bags and examined every item.

- **Lufthansa Airlines**

11/29/97 - Dulles International Airport

Dr. Firas Al-Kawas, an Arab-American doctor in Washington, D.C., was traveling to a conference in Damascus, Syria, on Lufthansa Airlines from Dulles Airport. Before he boarded the plane, Lufthansa security officials opened his luggage and emptied the contents on the ground. The Arab-American traveler was forced to re-pack his bags on the ground of the airport in full view of the whole terminal and other passengers. After sending a complaint to the airline, he received a letter explaining that Lufthansa had complied with FAA regulations which required the checked baggage and carry-on luggage of all passengers traveling to Syria to be searched by hand. They also provided the doctor with a general memorandum discussing the importance of the security

and screening procedures. This memorandum, in contrast to the airlines' claims, made no mention of specific destinations or countries that required bag searches. Dr. Al-Kawas' story was covered in an article about airline profiling published on February 18, 1997, in *Newsday*.

- **Air France**

12/5/96 - Dulles International Airport

A U.S. citizen of Syrian origin was waiting in line at Dulles Airport to check in for an Air France flight to Paris connecting to Damascus, when he was approached by an Air France agent who took his U.S. passport and his plane ticket and asked him to wait without any explanation. After waiting for 20 minutes while other passengers were being processed, the Arab American approached the Air France supervisor and asked for an explanation. The supervisor rudely responded that airport security was about to search his luggage. The supervisor then claimed that the search was random and nondiscriminatory. He then asked the passenger, aged 74, to move his luggage to an empty counter 60 feet away. No airport personnel helped him carry it. The luggage was searched without regard to his privacy, and all of his personal belongings were exposed to the public in the terminal. The passenger had to repack the bags himself. The overall security supervisor stated that the search was not mandatory and confirmed that the Arab-American man was the only passenger to have his luggage hand-searched on the Damascus-bound 747 flight.

- **Delta Airlines**

12/15/96 - Istanbul Airport

A Fulbright fellow from the University of Chicago conducting academic research in Turkey was traveling on December 15, 1996 on Delta Airlines from Istanbul to Frankfurt, continuing on to Atlanta and Miami for the holidays. After going through the routine inspection and verification of his passport, the Delta security agent asked him the following personal questions: "What is the origin of your name?", "What are you doing in Turkey?", "Where have you traveled in Turkey?", and "Why did you travel to Iran?" (He had visited Tehran three months earlier.)

- **Northwest Airlines**

12/22/96 - Pittsburgh International Airport

An Arab-American woman was scheduled to fly Northwest Airlines from Pittsburgh International Airport to Damascus, Syria. Upon noticing that Damascus was the final destination, the attendant at the Northwest counter in Pittsburgh stated that "Syria is a profile country" and called for airport security. After a 30-minute wait, the woman's luggage was searched in open view and her suitcases emptied on the floor without regard for her privacy. When she complained that all her belongings were getting dirty, Northwest security officials said they were following FAA regulations, adding that any complaints should be taken up with the FAA.

- **Northwest Airlines**

12/24/96 - Miami Airport

Before a Northwest Airlines flight from Miami, Florida, to Detroit, Michigan, was scheduled to take off, the flight attendant began calling out the names of several passengers to come to the front of the cabin. A passenger noticed that all the names being called appeared to be of Arab or Middle Eastern origin. The flight attendant said that there was one bag too many on the aircraft and that she needed to verify that these passengers were on the flight. Once the Northwest officials realized that the extra bag belonged to someone who had taken an earlier flight, they let the Arab and Iranian American passengers back to their seats and the plane took off.

• **British Airways**
12/28/96 - Pittsburgh Airport
A Lebanese couple in their sixties, who hold U.S. Green Cards, were asked to step aside for a security check by a British Airways agent on their flight from Pittsburgh airport to London and on to Beirut, Lebanon. The woman wears a head scarf for religious reasons. When their son, who is a U.S. citizen, asked why his parents were being singled out, the agent became indignant, and stated that it was routine, that it was for "their safety" and was pursuant to FAA regulations. The agent said they had to cooperate because they were "profiled." The elderly couple departed with a British Airways employee who X-rayed their bags and told them to remain calm because British Airways does this to "Eastern people automatically." After the luggage had been X-rayed, two airport security employees told them that they had "suspicious luggage" that had to be hand-searched. All of their luggage was then emptied on the table in the open and all of their personal items were displayed piece by piece. The mother started crying out of humiliation.

• **Air France**
1/20/97 - Dulles International Airport
A citizen of Lebanon and U.S. Green Card-holder arrived at the Air France terminal at Dulles International Airport for his flight to Beirut, Lebanon, via Paris. Air France personnel asked him to step out of a long line of passengers waiting at the ticket counter. His luggage was opened and searched in plain view of other travelers. The contents were left in a pile on the table and scattered on the floor. Forced to re-pack his belongings alone, the traveler felt humiliated by what he understood to be selective security searching based on his national origin and final flight destination.

• **Southwest Airlines**
2/97 - Tampa Airport
While traveling on Southwest Airlines from Tampa to Miami, a mother and her son, both U.S. citizens of Arab origin, were singled out for extra scrutiny. At the check-in counter, a Southwest representative marked all of the son's bags with red stickers and proceeded to hand-search all their luggage, item by item. Airport security detained them and asked questions such as why they were traveling and where they live. The questioning and search took place in front of all other passengers. Their carry-on bags were searched again at the boarding area by another security officer.

• **American Airlines**
2/17/97 - Washington National Airport
An Arab American had a confirmed seat on an American Airlines flight to Las Vegas departing from National Airport in Washington, D.C. At the airport, the American Airlines agent told him that he was being profiled and that his luggage had to be opened and checked. He was taken to a special security area and had his bags passed through a metal detector and then hand-searched. On his return trip to Washington, D.C., the passenger's luggage was again hand-searched by an airline employee who said that such searches were executed randomly.

• **Northwest Airlines**
2/21/97
An Arab American was traveling from Africa to Amsterdam and then to Detroit on Northwest Airlines. As all the travelers waited in line at the ticket counter, a Northwest security supervisor announced that "all Arabic-speaking peoples" must step aside. The Lebanese American presented his U.S. passport and work identification, which he was told "could be forged." Airline officials

asked him who he knew in Lebanon, if he had family there, where in Africa he stayed, the names of the people he stayed with, if they were Lebanese, if they belonged to any political groups, etc. The "Arabic-speaking" passengers were visibly shaken. Northwest airline officials asked if they were upset because they had something to hide. The group replied that they were innocent and encouraged the officials to search their luggage. The Northwest officials declined to search their bags after a long questioning session.

- **Northwest Airlines**

3/2/97 - Miami International Airport

An Arab-American man arrived at Miami International Airport for a domestic flight on Northwest Airlines to Memphis, Tennessee. The Arab American had been an equipment operator for Federal Express in the Fort Lauderdale International Airport for a year and a half. He was certified to service international and domestic flights and had received the necessary FAA-approved airport badge and a U.S. Customs sticker issued by the federal government. The Arab-American man complied with Federal Express company regulations and presented his Federal Express Identification at the check-in counter. The attendant asked for another form of identification and the passenger explained that his driver's licence was in his car and that he would get it. The Northwest official said that it would not be necessary and asked if he would be going anywhere else besides Memphis. She then repeated the words "one-way to Memphis" and attached an orange tag marked "selectee baggage" onto the luggage and told him that his luggage would be searched because he lacked proper identification. Security personnel emptied the contents of his luggage and X-rayed his bags three times. The couple did not see any other passengers being subjected to similar procedures. The man offered airline security his airport badge but was told "it was not necessary [because] it isn't going to change anything." Another agent explained that regardless of the forms of identification presented, "This was going to happen" because the traveler "fit the criteria." The agent explained that the airlines required the search to be done on "some nationalities [and] people from some countries," such as Syria and Iraq. Two airline officials escorted the Arab-American man to the gate and took his boarding pass. They told him that if he chose to spend the remaining time with his wife and child, who were dropping him off at the airport, they would be forced to search him again before boarding. Once his wife and child had left the airport, the airline officials returned his plane ticket. At the gate, the Northwest officials wrote his name down and held a portfolio containing a resume, Federal Express handbook and some of his personal items, confiscated by a Northwest official. The airline official then boarded the plane with the passenger and stood next to him until take-off.

- **U.S. Air**

4/3/97 - Chicago International Airport

A U.S. citizen of Jordanian origin was singled out at the U.S. Air terminal at the Chicago International Airport while boarding a domestic flight. Having lost his driver's license, he was carrying his U.S. passport which indicates that he was born in Amman, Jordan. After purchasing the ticket, the Arab American was told by U.S. Air personnel that he would have to be searched. An airport security officer escorted him to an X-ray station. While walking, he asked the security officer why he was being singled out. The officer responded that it was "random" and according to security procedures. The Arab-American passenger remarked that he did not think such searches should be performed randomly, and that he thought everyone should be searched. Otherwise, he said, "you'll miss the person who may have a bomb." The security officer suddenly turned and said, "Did you say you have a bomb?" As the traveler protested that this was not what he had said, the security officer immediately sent his colleague to call for the Chicago police. Five police officers arrived and escorted him to a private room; no one listened to his explanations. The man was forced

to strip down to his underwear. The officers inspected his clothes, his shoes, and his carry-on bag, and patted him down. When the search was complete, the traveler was escorted to the plane.

- **KLM Airlines**

4/20/97 - Houston International Airport

At the KLM counter in the Houston International Airport, the check-in agent announced that all passengers traveling to Damascus would have their bags searched. When questioned, KLM officials said that according to FAA regulations, the search singled out everyone traveling to Damascus as their final destination, regardless of ethnicity. When an Arab-American family asked for a copy of this regulation, the officials explained it could only be received directly from the FAA.

- **U.S. Airways**

5/97 - Washington National Airport

A man whose first name is Mohammed was traveling from Washington National Airport to T.F. Green Airport in Providence, Rhode Island, on U.S. Airways (formerly U.S. Air). After entering his name into a computer, the airline official began to fill out bright green tags marked "Positive Bag Match" and attached them to the passenger's luggage. The official stated that they were using new procedures and that his carry-on luggage would have to be X-rayed. The Arab-American passenger then asked why no one else seemed to be under the same scrutiny and the agent replied that it was "a random security procedure" and that the FAA and U.S. Airways classified certain groups of passengers based on "profiles." The passenger wrote to U.S. Airways to complain about the manner in which he was treated.

- **Northwest Airlines**

5/4/97 - Buffalo Airport

A Syrian mother and her 5-year-old daughter were told that their bags had to be X-rayed at Buffalo Airport as they prepared to board a Northwest Airlines flight to Detroit, connecting to Amsterdam, and finally on to Damascus. When they asked why they were being singled out from the rest of the passengers, they were told that it was mandated by FAA regulations. The hand- search of their bags was carried out in plain view of other passengers who looked at them and laughed as they passed by. The Syrian woman began to cry. During the search, a Northwest employee inadvertently damaged a sweater that was originally packed in the luggage. The passenger and her brother, who accompanied her to the airport, asked for documentation to acknowledge that the employee had damaged the sweater. The Northwest employee gave the woman's brother a hand-written note that had neither the passenger's name nor the Northwest employee's signature on it. When the Syrian woman's brother pressed for more formal documentation, the Northwest employee began to shout, snatched the paper from the man's hand and called security, saying that the man was harassing her. When the Syrian woman's brother tried to clarify that he was the one being harassed, the security guard threatened to arrest him. Realizing that the guard was biased, the woman's brother had no choice but to leave the airport, hoping to take up the matter with Northwest's management directly.

- **Northwest Airlines**

5/11/97 - Detroit Metropolitan Airport

An Arab American was informed by a Northwest employee at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport that he fit the "criteria" as he prepared to travel to Syria via Amsterdam. When inquiring what "criteria selectee" meant, the Arab-American man was told that the computer indicated that he must submit to an X-ray search. The Northwest employee refused to elaborate when asked for further information and proceeded to place a sticker on the passenger's luggage, carry-on bag, and

ticket. The golden sticker indicated that his bags were going to be placed on the plane only after the security personnel had verified that he had boarded. After his carry-on bag was X-rayed, his check-in bag was hand-searched in plain view of other passengers and airport personnel. Northwest Airlines refused to give any reason as to why the Arab-American man was the only person who was pulled from the line and subjected to such scrutiny.

- **Northwest Airlines**

5/13/97 - Lansing Airport

An Arab American booked a flight on Northwest Airlines from Lansing to Detroit, Michigan, connecting to a KLM flight to Amsterdam and on to Cairo, Egypt. The airline attendant told the traveler that for security reasons his bags would be searched. She then placed a yellow sticker on his bag and explained that this is what they call a "dump search." She then hand-searched his luggage for one hour. The Arab-American man of Egyptian descent saw no one being subjected to the same procedures. After the search was completed, the passenger spoke with the supervisor who explained that these security measures were mandated by FAA regulations, which had been in effect for years. The Egyptian American, who travels a number of times each year on business, had never encountered treatment of this kind prior to this incident.

- **Northwest/KLM Airlines**

5/18/97 - Raleigh Airport

An Arab-American woman was traveling on a Northwest/KLM flight from Raleigh-Durham, NC, Airport to Damascus, Syria. Her bags were submitted to a hand-search and marked with yellow tags reading "selected luggage." When asked why this search was executed, Northwest officials stated that certain nationalities are treated in this manner for security reasons.

- **U.S. Airways**

5/24/97 - Cleveland Airport

An Arab American of Syrian descent was traveling with his Russian-born wife on U.S. Airways from Cleveland to the Caribbean island of St. Martin via Baltimore. At the Cleveland airport, the couple was told by U.S. Airways personnel that they met the FAA guidelines for a security search. Their bags were given tags marked "Positive ID" and then hand-searched and X-rayed. The employee refused to give her name at the couple's request. The couple had to re-pack their bags and were told that they could not open their carry-on luggage until the plane had left the airport. In Baltimore, their earmarked luggage was set aside until the airline confirmed that they had boarded the plane continuing on to St. Martin. The couple has filed a $4 million lawsuit against U.S. Airways, contending that they were subjected to humiliating procedures which violated their constitutional rights. Their profiling experience has been covered in a number of newspapers, including *The New York Times* (8/11/97), *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland, 7/12/97: A 1), and *The Blade* (7/12/97: 1).

- **Northwest Airlines**

6/97 - Detroit Metro Airport

An 18 year-old Arab American was profiled when he flew on Northwest Airlines from Metro Airport in Detroit to Cincinnati. He was traveling to compete in a National High School Rowing Team Competition. The Northwest agent detained the young man at the security desk in order to hand-check his baggage, causing him to miss his plane. When questioned why he was singled out, an airline official stated that he "fit a profile," but added that she was forbidden to say anything more. The incident was reported in the *Detroit Free Press* (6/25/97 and 7/2/97).

• **Alaska Airlines**
6/22/97 - San Diego Airport
An Arab-American man booked a ticket to travel on Alaska Airlines from San Diego to Portland, Oregon. When the check-in agents asked the man if he had any luggage to be checked, he said no, adding that all he carried with him was a small wheeled bag and a computer. When an airline official placed large red stickers and orange tags on his luggage, the Arab-American man said he felt that this was a form a branding. An airline employee then told him that his bags had to be searched in compliance with FAA regulations. The Arab-American man refused to be subjected to the search, explaining that he felt it was unjustly prompted by his Arabic surname. He canceled his flight and asked for a refund.

2. Local Government Agencies

Arab Americans are sometimes discriminated against by the very agencies set up to uphold their rights as citizens. At the local level, ADC members have made complaints about city authorities and ethnic discrimination at City Hall. Arab-American business owners in San Francisco have been especially active in challenging perceived discrimination in city agencies' preferential system of awarding city contracts. Arab Americans do not have minority status, although they often experience the same discriminatory treatment suffered by other minorities.

a) Case Summaries:

• **Hartford, CT**
1/23/97
The Islamic Institute of Connecticut alleged religious discrimination on the part of the Hartford Redevelopment Authority. The Institute wanted to build an Islamic school on the land for the 3,000 Muslim families in Hartford. The non-profit Institute applied to purchase one of six city-owned properties for sale. City officials allegedly disregarded the Institute's inquiries and interest in the property for several months. The Redevelopment Authority then announced that they had sold the more desirable, larger piece of real estate to an Episcopal church for a nursing assistant program. The Redevelopment Authority then offered a less valuable piece of property to the Islamic Institute for 20 times the amount of money of the city's last sale. The city's unequal treatment of the Islamic Institute in the sale of city-owned properties angered local Muslims. In July, the Institute organized a rally in Hartford to draw attention to their complaint and to encourage the city to listen to the requests of the Muslim community. The Islamic Institute is continuing its efforts to buy land and establish an Islamic school in Hartford.

• **San Francisco, CA**
5/97
A consulting firm owned by Arab Americans was told by the city to team up with a minority firm if it wanted to be considered for city contracts.

• **San Francisco, CA**
5/97
Owners of an Arab-American company which services cars for the Police Department reported that they went out of business after police officers asked if they were minorities. They replied that,

as Palestinian Americans, they thought that they did qualify as minorities. All their business with the local police department ceased within two months after this conversation.

• **San Francisco, CA**
5/97
The head of a city department was reported to have commented to his senior staff members that no Arab was going to secure a lease to rent concession facilities. One staff member was married to a Palestinian and reported the discriminatory comment to ADC.

• **Cleveland, OH**
5/30/97
An Arab-American man's bid to develop property in downtown Cleveland elicited strong objections by a Jewish American Councilwoman. The Arab-American developer wrote to ADC that he felt he was being "'demonized' by public officials because of his ethnic background, adding that a simple property matter had been escalated into an issue imbued with overt racial, religious and ethnic overtones. The *Cleveland Jewish News* (5/9/97, p. 20) reported that Merle Gordon, a Jewish Councilwoman of Ward 15, had found the associates of the Arab-American developer threatening when they stood in the waiting area of the City Council meetings. According to the report, she said: "They were very intimidating. They would point me out - saying, 'That's her.'" Gordon reportedly said that even though her personal safety was in danger, she was obligated to vote against the developer due to her conscience. The Arab-American developer said that he felt targeted by the Councilwoman and discriminated against on the basis of his ethnic background for her political gains.

3. Immigration and Naturalization Services

Despite the fact that 'Mideastern terrorists' were not responsible for the Oklahoma City bombing — contrary to media speculations — legislation was passed which most adversely impacts Arab Americans. The **Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996** renders lawful First Amendment political activities a crime and gives the FBI expanded surveillance powers over the legal and peaceful activities of immigrant communities and organizations. The Act allows for the deportation of non-citizens on the grounds of suspicion of links to organizations abroad which the United States designates as "terrorist," even if the individuals have not engaged in any illegal or violent activity. This despite the fact that in the precedent-setting 'LA 8' case, a California Court of Appeals recently determined that immigrants have the same First Amendment rights as U.S. citizens to conduct lawful political activity.

Ironically, the Anti-Terrorism Act, which directly targets immigrants, was passed on the anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing and yet does not address domestic terrorism. Most alarmingly, the Anti-Terrorism Act allows for the use of secret evidence that the immigrant and his or her attorney cannot see, thus denying the basic right of due process and the right to confront one's accuser in court. The Anti-Terrorism Act also punishes U.S. citizens with the threat of a 10-year prison sentence for donating funds to humanitarian programs, such as medical clinics, orphanages or schools which are affiliated to "terrorist" organizations, even if the activities and fundraising are entirely legal and protected by the Constitution.

The State Department recently designated 30 groups as 'terrorist organizations,' of which more than half are Arab or Muslim groups. *Suspected* membership or dealings with any of the specified organizations can be grounds for visa denial to a prospective immigrant or even a visiting journalist or speaker. Although groups such as the Shining Path of Peru and the Japanese Red Army are included in the list, ***the "secret evidence" provisions in the Anti-Terrorism Act have been used to target Arabs more than any other immigrant community in the United States.***

Immigrants from the Arab world constitute an increasingly important element in the ethnic makeup of American society. Like many other immigrant and minority groups in America today, Arab Americans are targets of a "new nativism" sweeping the country. Along with Americans of Asian, African, and Hispanic descent, Arab Americans must contend with the misunderstanding and hostility of those who see non-European immigrants and America's increasingly multi-ethnic society as a threat.

One of the legislative products of this anti-immigrant sentiment was the **Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA) of 1996**, which imposes harsh punishments for minor violations of visa status and makes it more difficult to secure political asylum in the United States. The immigration laws now being implemented by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) allow for the use of secret evidence in deportation cases and deny the opportunity for adequate hearings in political asylum cases.

IIRAIRA, which was enacted in September 1996, takes away many forms of "amnesty" or relief from deportation and creates more requirements and bureaucratic procedures for people who want to immigrate or become legal permanent residents. It is the most restrictive piece of legislation passed in the United States since the early 1920's. Indeed, IIRAIRA not only severely restricts the immigration flow, but also grants INS officers a great deal of discretion in deciding whether to allow prospective immigrants to enter the country. Political asylum requirements are also harder to meet under the new legislation. The rejection of an immigrant applying for political asylum may mean that he or she would be returned to a country where he or she may be persecuted or killed. In addition, legal immigrants who have been convicted of certain felonies and misdemeanors at *any* time in the past — such as bouncing a check — can now be deported. Misdemeanors and felonies represent two different levels of crime and should be recognized as such in immigration law.

IIRAIRA essentially reinforces and amends the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1996 which is also having broad and unprecedented effects on immigrant communities. Both legislations allow the use of secret evidence in administrative and judicial proceedings without any opportunity for defense lawyers to refute the evidence presented by the government. The use of secret evidence essentially denies defendants their due process right to confront their accusers in court. The Department of Justice is using "secret evidence" in a dozen current deportation cases, *all of them involving Arab nationals.*

a) Case Summaries:

- **California**

1987-1997: ADC v. Reno

In *ADC v. Reno*, otherwise known as the 'LA 8' case, the U.S. government lost every significant round in its 10-year effort to deport seven Palestinians and the Kenyan-born wife of one of the immigrants for supporting lawful activities of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

(PFLP), which is one of the U.S. government's designated "terrorist organizations." A California Federal Appeals Court recently turned down the government's most recent argument that neither citizens nor aliens have a constitutional right to support the lawful activities of a "terrorist organization." The California Court thus struck down a key position of the Anti-Terrorism Act, which makes *lawful* political activity a crime. This ongoing case is an important legal precedent supporting the proposition that legal aliens have the same First Amendment rights as citizens. California Courts have continually barred the INS from deporting the "LA 8." The government recently granted two of them permanent legal resident status.

- **Michigan**

1990-97: Imad Hamad

INS has been attempting to deport a stateless Palestinian social worker who has resided in the United States for 17 years based on "secret evidence." Hamad lives in Dearborn with his wife and two young daughters — all U.S. citizens. Since the beginning of the case, INS officers have exhibited questionable behavior, making claims of missing documents and lost files to deny approval of adjustment of status. Hamad also received threatening, anonymous phone calls from someone who had access to information which could only have been available to an immigration officer. The government accused Hamad of membership in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Hamad participated in a peaceful demonstration against Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon as a student and took part in fundraising activities for humanitarian purposes. In a ruling on October 1, 1997, an immigration judge ruled that the secret evidence was not substantial enough to deny Hamad adjustment of status to that of permanent resident. The government may still appeal the case.

- **Michigan**

1996-97: Ali Termos

Ali Termos, a Lebanese citizen, was deported on October 6, 1997, after being jailed for one year based on secret evidence describing him as a "security risk." Termos was arrested in October 1996 for working without a permit and overstaying his student visa. Immediately after his arrest, he was questioned by the FBI about his connections to "terrorist" organizations such as Hezbollah. Termos acknowledged sending a nominal sum each year to a Hezbollah-run orphanage in Lebanon where two children of a deceased relative are being cared for. He also admitted being publicly outspoken against Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon. The Court denied him bond based on "secret evidence" which his lawyer was not allowed to review. Termos was separated from his wife, a U.S. citizen, and sent back to Lebanon.

- **West Virginia**

8/6/96 - Yahia Meddah

Yahia Meddah, a 26-year-old Algerian, immigrated to the United States in 1993 to escape persecution by the 'Armed Islamic Group' (GIA), which murdered members of Meddah's family for not cooperating with the organization. The GIA, which is designated as a 'terrorist' organization by the State Department, sentenced Meddah to death and pledged to execute him upon his return to Algeria. After settling in West Virginia, Meddah married a U.S. citizen. Following an altercation with his wife's daughter and her boyfriend on August 6, 1996, he was sent to the hospital where INS agents picked him up. He has been detained in York County Prison in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for 13 months, of which more than seven months were spent in solitary confinement. The only official charge against him is entering the United States on false documents. However, the government submitted secret evidence against him accusing him of being a 'terrorist.'

• **California**
3/27/97
A group of Iraqi citizens who were originally flown from Iraq to the United States by the U.S. government face exclusion proceedings based on secret evidence. They were brought to the United States on March 27, 1997, as members of U.S.-funded Iraqi opposition groups and were promised asylum. However, shortly after their arrival, they were detained based on lack of valid immigration visas. Family members transported with the Iraqis have been granted asylum and are being resettled in five different states. However, INS stated that the asylum applications had been denied because the Iraqis presented a "national security risk" based on secret evidence.

• **Maryland**
3/31/97
INS denied the application for work authorization of an Arab woman wearing a head cover, or *hijab*. In the photographs accompanying her application, her *hijab* hid her ears. INS protocol for issuing an Employment Authorization Document includes photographs of the applicant from the "right ear to the cheek." The woman and her husband alleged discrimination by the INS against their religion (Islam). ADC raised the issue with INS Commissioner Dorris Meisner who subsequently issued the work authorization.

• **Virginia**
9/97 - Anwar Haddam
Anwar Haddam was arrested by INS agents after his parole immigration status expired. INS attorneys have been pushing for his deportation to Algeria based on secret evidence, although he faces the risk of torture or execution in Algeria for his political associations. Haddam, who has been detained since early 1997, has been on a hunger strike. He is the father of three U.S.-born children. Haddam's defense attorneys have filed an appeal for political asylum.

• **New York**
5/5/97 - Nasser Ahmed
Nasser Ahmed, a 37-year-old Egyptian man, is being held in a New York jail and faces deportation based on secret evidence used by INS to prove his association with an unnamed 'terrorist organization.' Ahmed served as the court-appointed translator for Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman in the World Trade Center trial. The judge in Ahmed's case said that he has "no doubt" that Ahmed's political beliefs "will likely result in his torture if he is returned to Egypt." Yet, he added that immigration judges cannot rule on the constitutionality of particular laws which they are bound to enforce. Ahmed has been detained in solitary confinement for 18 months.

• **Florida**
6/6/97 - Mazen Al-Najjar
Mazen Al-Najjar is being detained in Tampa, Florida, based on secret evidence of association with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group. Al-Najjar came to the United States in 1981 as a student. Arrested for overstaying his student visa for more than 10 years, he was then denied bond on grounds that he was a "national security risk." Al-Najjar was held to be deportable to the United Arab Emirates and his wife to Saudi Arabia, although both states refused to accept them since they are neither nationals nor residents of either country. Al-Najjar is a community activist who was the chief editor of an academic research journal published by the World and Islam Studies Enterprise.

• **Minnesota**
8/4/97
An INS officer accused a couple of having a fraudulent marriage. The INS officer was apparently courteous to the couple until the U.S. citizen woman said that she had converted to Islam a few days earlier. The woman reported to ADC that the INS officer's attitude quickly changed and immediately became disrespectful. The officer said she would not approve the case before she spoke with the woman's Arab spouse. Since this first meeting, the couple has repeatedly called the INS officer and sent her all requested materials to demonstrate the validity of their marriage. The wife is currently expecting a child. Throughout the process to obtain a Green Card for the husband, the INS officer has not returned or received most of their calls and has not sent the necessary official documents, as promised. The couple submitted a number of documents to the INS by U.S. mail and to the officer specifically by hand delivery. However, the INS officer claims she never received the documents. The couple suspect that the INS officer has deliberately drawn out the immigration process for over a two-year period because of her prejudices against Islam and Arabs. Unfortunately, they have no recourse until the INS officer rules on the case.

4. Law Enforcement and the Judiciary

Some of the incidents reported as anti-Arab discrimination each year by ADC members are committed by law enforcement agencies. Ironically, the 'keepers of peace' and 'defenders of justice' are sometimes part of the problem of discrimination and bias against Arab Americans.

It is particularly dangerous when stereotypes shape the attitudes and behavior of law enforcement officials, who have a great deal of control and power over regular citizens. Discriminatory use of this power can have a profound effect on its victims. In some instances, personal prejudices lead law enforcement officials to treat Arab Americans with excessive suspicion, as if they were more likely to jump bond, kidnap a child, or flee a crime scene.

In the first case below, the police department in Portsmouth, Virginia, redressed the extreme religious bias of a few of the police officers with a sensitivity course. Cultural sensitivity courses can be a positive step in the fight against discrimination and should be implemented whenever possible. Such courses can break down ethnic stereotypes and ensure equal treatment by law enforcement officials.

As U.S. citizens, Arab Americans have the right to a fair trial and fair treatment at the hands of judges and police officers. However, the negative stereotypes of Arabs in the media are often understood to be real portrayals of Arab culture and may come back to haunt Arab Americans in their dealings with law enforcement or judicial officials. In January 1997, a judge in Dearborn, Michigan, ruled that an attorney could show the anti-Muslim film, "Not Without My Daughter," to a jury deciding on a child custody case between an Arab-American father and a European-American mother. Incredibly, the judge allowed a defamatory film portraying Muslim men as abusers and child-kidnappers to be introduced in court, thus affecting a judicial proceeding.

a) Case Summaries:

• **Portsmouth, VA**
10/96
Two women wearing traditional Muslim veils for religious reasons were walking from the local mosque to a shop to buy a treat for their children when they were stopped by police. The officers prevented them from entering the store, citing a law which states that it is illegal to wear a "mask" in public. They frisked the two women, handcuffed them, and took them to the police station. They were later released. As a result of complaints about the arrests from ADC and other civil rights groups, a sensitivity workshop was organized for the local police department to avoid similar incidents in the future.

• **Santa Monica, CA**
1/16/97
An Arab-French man was granted political asylum in the United States and awarded custody of his daughter, who is a French citizen, by a U.S. Court in Santa Monica, California. The Arab-French immigrant alleges that his ex-wife was sexually abusing their daughter and involving her in a child pornography ring. Some time after the decision, two off-duty plain-clothed Santa Monica police officers forced their way into his sister's home and assaulted the occupants. The police officers were accompanied by three French officials from the French Consulate in Los Angeles and by the child's French mother. The police officers served a warrant from France, which was neither verified nor authorized by a U.S. Court. The girl's mother then allegedly abducted their daughter. The case was immediately brought before a federal judge who called airport security and had the mother and daughter removed from a Paris-bound plane at the Los Angeles Airport. The federal judge prohibited the removal of the 5-year old girl from Los Angeles and granted the Arab-French man a custody decree on an emergency basis. Defying federal court orders to appear before the judge the next day, the mother smuggled the daughter back to France via Mexico. The Arab-French man has not seen his daughter since the abduction. A suit was filed against the Santa Monica Police Department alleging police misconduct and violation of civil rights.

• **Dearborn, MI**
1/22/97
A judge permitted the film "Not Without My Daughter" to be shown in a child custody trial. The movie, which depicts a Muslim man who coerces his American wife and daughter to travel to Iran where he abuses and imprisons them, was decidedly prejudicial against the Muslim Arab-American father in his case against his European-American ex-wife. In the courtroom, the Arab American felt that he was not given a chance to speak or defend himself. The couple reached an agreement out of the Court's intervention to have joint custody of their daughter. However, the Arab-American man believed that he was discriminated against on the basis of national origin and religion by the judge.

• **Savannah, GA**
3/11/97
A young Palestinian American man was the subject of a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) sting operation during which he was arrested for allegedly purchasing stolen property from an undercover police officer. The Arab American was set up to buy stolen weapons from ATF agents but allegedly refused to make the purchase. Fifty police officers then raided his family business, seized allegedly stolen goods and arrested the man. During a bond hearing, the police agreed to release the Arab American on bond but the judge refused, saying: "He is Palestinian and

he will flee." The young man has never been outside the United States and speaks little Arabic. In an attempt to secure bond for the defendant, two different defense attorneys offered to surrender to the Court all U.S. passports belonging to the man and his family. The man's attorney also told the judge that his client was ready to sign an extradition agreement from anywhere the court specified. The judge repeatedly refused to grant bond, forcing the Arab-American man to remain in prison for months awaiting trial.

• **Jackson, MI**
6/11/97
An Arab-American prison inmate and Vietnam veteran suffering great physical pain due to a number of ailments was prevented from going to the Veterans of America hospital by the prison doctor. The doctor has made numerous racial slurs about his Arab background and activism. The Arab-American inmate was a community activist before he entered prison and continues to organize and educate other inmates while serving his sentence. The inmate, who is Muslim, alleges that the doctor is incompetent and that he was targeted for discrimination on the basis of ethnic and religious background.

• **Fairfax, VA**
3/10/97
An Arab-American man was the victim of an accident involving a truck stopped in the lane of an interstate highway. He suffered severe and permanent injuries, including brain damage. The police officer who arrived on the scene did not ticket the driver of the truck for illegal parking on the highway and did not accurately note down the details of the accident. The accident report was a crucial piece of evidence necessary to prove the truck driver's wrongdoing in the Arab American's lawsuit. Indeed, the victim's legal case has been negatively impacted by the accident report. The Arab American felt that the police officer deliberately filed an inaccurate accident report due to his ethnic background and his Arabic-sounding name on his driver's license. The Fairfax County Police Department concluded that there was "insufficient evidence" against the police officer present at the scene of the accident to support the victim's allegations of discrimination.

• **Seattle, WA**
7/24/97
A judge in Seattle terminated all parental rights of an Arab-American Muslim couple. Their six children are currently separated and residing in three different foster homes, only one of which is a Muslim household. The couple alleged discrimination based on religion (Islam). The case began when one of the couple's children was vomiting and had severe abdominal pain. The couple called 911 and a medic came to their home and said: "Why is this white woman with this black man?" The father yelled at the medic to focus on his child's health. The medic called for police back-up and the father was arrested for being difficult with the medics. The child died and the medical examiner ruled that it was a homicide. The family conducted their own separate review of the autopsy and found that the child had suffered a puncture wound from a children's bicycle handle bars when he accidentally ran into his brother's bike. The father was cleared of any wrongdoing in the death of his son but the parents still lost custody of all their children. The case is on appeal.

5. The FBI

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Arab Americans have a historically ambivalent relationship. On the one hand, Arab Americans want the FBI to investigate hate crimes against

members of their community. They especially want a resolution to the case of Alex Odeh, ADC's West Coast Regional Director, who was assassinated by a bomb trip-wired to his office door in Santa Ana, California, on October 11, 1985. The FBI identified three suspects in his murder, believed to be affiliated with the Jewish Defense League (JDL). All three allegedly fled to the right-wing Israeli settlement of Kiryat Arba following the assassination. One of the suspects, Robert Manning, was later extradited to the United States by Israel for the unrelated mail-bomb killing of a California woman. The other two suspects — Keith Fuchs and Andrew Green — are still at large. The Arab-American community continues to push for a resolution in this case.

While Arab Americans are themselves the victims of hate crimes, they are at the same time treated as a 'suspect community.' Especially in times of crisis, such as the Gulf War, the Oklahoma City bombing, the TWA Flight 800 crash, and the 1997 Empire State shooting, Arab Americans become convenient scapegoats and the object of FBI interrogations and surveillance based on their ethnic background.

As a result, relations between the Arab-American community and the FBI have been strained. In fact, it is an FBI two-year sting operation, "Abscam," which gave impetus to the establishment of ADC in 1980. In Operation Abscam, FBI agents disguised themselves as "Arab sheiks" and offered members of Congress bribes in an effort to uncover corruption in high places. In preparation for the operation, FBI agents watched television shows to learn how to mimick Arabs — unaware that the rampant stereotypes of Arabs in the media are largely inaccurate. Two years of undercover operations funded by U.S. taxpayer dollars failed to incriminate anyone. The operation was not only a botched attempt at exposing corrupt politicians, but it served to perpetuate negative stereotypes of Arabs as unscrupulous, greedy and dishonest. The FBI never apologized for the defamatory nature of the operation.

Despite the Arab-American community's dismay at Operation Abscam, FBI agents once again conducted a similar sting operation in 1996. In a variation of Abscam, they posed as liaisons for "Mideast terrorists" and approached the leader of the Mountaineer Militia in Clarksburg, West Virginia, asking if he could provide them with the blueprints of a new FBI center in the area. The militiaman allegedly accepted the undercover agent's offer in exchange for a large sum of money. (*U.S. News and World Report*, 10/21/96, p. 22) Once again, the FBI based its operation on negative stereotypes of Arabs as prone to terrorism.

FBI "sting" operations are not the only source of tension with the Arab-American community. In the mid-1980's, a contingency plan for the mass arrest of Middle East nationals living in the United States was drafted by the Justice Department in consultation with the FBI. The document, which was leaked, indicated that, in the eventually of a crisis in the Middle East, thousands of Middle East nationals would be imprisoned in internment camps in Louisiana and Florida prior to deportation. With memory of the internment of Japanese Americans still fresh in the minds of many Americans, ADC and other civil rights groups were particularly outraged at the idea that such an operation was seriously considered.

In the last two decades, the FBI has targeted Arab Americans for extra surveillance because their ethnic background and legal political activities made them 'suspect.' Through interviewing neighbors and co-workers and collecting information from local government agencies, the FBI leads citizens, police, social workers, state employees and immigration officials to believe that Arab Americans are somehow more likely to engage in criminal activity and are less loyal to the United States than other citizens.

For instance, in February 1997, several Arab Americans reported being inappropriately contacted by the local and state authorities after a random incident on the top of the Empire State Building in New York City where a Palestinian visitor to the United States shot at innocent tourists. When local and federal authorities went to interview employees at Kinko's, where the gunman was last seen, the authorities asked the manager, "Does anyone Arab work here?," rather than the more appropriate question, "Did anyone speak to this man when he came into your store?" An Arab-American woman who worked at Kinko's but had not spoken to the gunman was singled out by the FBI in front of her co-workers solely due to her ethnicity. The FBI agents also contacted and interrogated a number of other Arab-American families who did not know the shooter and felt that they were targeted for questioning solely because of their ethnic background.

Under the new immigration and anti-terrorism laws adopted in the last two years, the FBI is further extending its interrogations, investigations, and informant networks. The Anti-Terrorism Act, which turns hitherto protected First Amendment political activity into new federal crimes, gives the FBI a 'legal green light' to increase its surveillance of immigrant communities and organizations which support struggles for freedom and justice abroad. The new law authorizes $865 million over the next four years for the FBI and other federal agencies to set up a new counter-terrorism "command center," hire hundreds of new agents and expand investigations of political organizations disfavored by the government. Groups which espouse unpopular political views have typically been branded as 'terrorist' by the U.S. government. In fact, during the 1970's, the African National Congress and Nelson Mandela were on the Department of State's 'terrorist list.'

VI. DEFAMATION

The problem of anti-Arab discrimination is compounded by the rampant stereotypes of Arabs in the U.S. media. Negative images of Arabs and, by association, Arab Americans, are pervasive in broadcast and print outlets which capitalize on the tired clichés of Arabs as ruthless terrorists, oil-rich "sheikhs," desert bedouins, greasy merchants, and so forth. At the same time, there is almost a total absence of positive images of Arabs as loving parents, competent professionals, or conscientious citizens. Arabs are typically portrayed as a threat or an object of mockery, while the Arab world is presented without complexity or subtlety. There has been no "Dances with Wolves" for the Arab world. No "Fiddler on the Roof" for traditional Arab village life. No "Cry Freedom" for the Intifada.

The effect of media images on popular perception cannot be dismissed as mere entertainment. Indeed, there is a link between the media's anti-Arab spin on an event and the ensuing violence and discrimination directed at Arab Americans. A case in point is the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing, when the media rushed to point blame at Arabs in the absence of evidence. As a result, more than 200 hate crimes were committed against Arab Americans and Muslims in the few days when speculations were flying on news outlets. (A Rush to Judgment, Council on American-Islamic Relations, 1995)

Dr. Jack Shaheen, author of The TV Arab (Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984) and the foremost authority on media stereotypes, identified the following myths perpetrated by the media about Arabs and Muslims:

- ***Media Myth 1:*** *Islam is a monolithic religion and all Muslims are radical and violent.* Islam is seen as a "non-Western" religion, rather than a branch of a common Judeo-Christian-Muslim tradition. There is a tendency among some intellectuals and policy-makers to regard Islam as the new, post-Cold War "enemy." Sadly, this perception of enmity with Arabs and Muslims helps create a climate in which anti-Arab discrimination can flourish.

- ***Media Myth 2:*** *All Muslims are Arabs.* In fact, Islam has adherents from every racial and ethnic group. Only about 12 percent of Muslims are Arabs. Most Muslims are neither Arab nor Persian, but Indonesian, Indian or Malaysian.

- ***Media Myth 3:*** *All Arabs are Muslim.* While the majority of Arabs are Muslims, about 15 million of them are Christians — ranging from Eastern Orthodox to Episcopalians to Roman Catholics.

- ***Media Myth 4:*** *All Middle Easterners are Arabs.* Many Americans wrongly assume that Iranians and Turks are Arabs as well.

Throughout this century, the media has typically portrayed Arabs as one of the 3 B's — billionaires, bombers or belly dancers. The "typical" Arab male is portrayed as a terrorist or an oil sheikh bent on violence, greed and abuse. Another popular image is that of the Arab woman as oppressed, veiled and submissive — or, to the other extreme, as a loose belly-dancer.

In his latest publication, Arab and Muslim Stereotyping in American Popular Culture (Georgetown University: Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, 1997), Dr. Shaheen presents an in-depth look at the portrayal of Arabs and Muslims in the entertainment and news media. Dr. Shaheen, who has monitored the media for 20 years, estimates that 25 to 30 movies vilifying Arabs and Muslims air on television networks and cable shows every week. These are just the re-runs. New shows that perpetuate Arab stereotypes are being produced regularly. In addition, he found that at least one cartoon a week is aired on television that includes stereotypical images of "evil" Arabs. Shaheen has also documented over 900 motion pictures with anti-Arab biases since the start of the commercial film industry in 1893.

In short, Arab stereotypes are pervasive in American popular culture despite the recent trend toward greater multicultural representation. In the 1997-98 television season, about one-third of all prime-time programs feature minority characters including Latinos, Asian Americans, African Americans and gays. Not one Arab-American character has yet appeared. While most ethnic groups can see positive representations of themselves on television, Arab Americans cannot. The prevalence of negative media images make the Arab-American community particularly vulnerable to hate crimes and discrimination.

Below are only a few select examples of anti-Arab defamation in the media. The frequency of negative images is pervasive and occurs on a daily basis, whether in print or on the airwaves.

1. Movies

One of the worst offenders in the last two years has been — incredibly — Walt Disney and its subsidiaries. Although Disney is known for humanizing animal characters, such as Mickey Mouse, dehumanizing Arabs has become part of the studio's repertoire since the production of "Aladdin" in 1993.

ADC sought a dialogue with Disney following the release of "Aladdin" whose opening theme song contained the following offensive lyrics in reference to Aladdin's birthplace: "I come from a land far away, where the camels roam... where they cut off your ear if they don't like your face. It's barbaric but hey, it's home." In addition, all the 'evil' characters spoke with thick accents, while the 'good' characters spoke in a flawless American English. After lengthy negotiations and protests, Disney agreed to make a few changes to the video and subsequent television versions of the animated film. Disney also pledged greater sensitivity toward the portrayal of Arabs in future productions.

What ensued was exactly the opposite. Since "Aladdin," not only has Disney failed to consult Arab Americans in productions involving Arab themes — as it did with other groups, such as Native Americans before the release of "Pocahontas" — but the media giant has also produced a plethora of anti-Arab films such as "Father of the Bride, Part II," "Kazaam," " Operation Condor," and " G.I. Jane." Disney's media messages are typically consumed by impressionable, young minds.The proliferation of anti-Arab images by Walt Disney is particularly disturbing to the Arab-American community precisely because Disney is the world's leader in children's entertainment.

• **"Father of the Bride, Part II"**
1/96 - Walt Disney
This movie by Walt Disney Pictures features a villair named Mr. Habib, an obnoxious, repulsive man who speaks with a thick accent and uses mock Arabic language. Mr. Habib, who is portrayed as unscrupulous, cruel and shrewd, verbally abuses his wife, throws trash in a family's garden and extorts $100,000 from the family next door. In one scene, after Mr. Habib yells at his wife in mock Arabic, the timid spouse mutters a few unintelligible words as she lowers her eyes to the ground. The film perpetuates the stereotypes of Arab men as rich, money-grubbing and disrespectful to women, and depicts Arab women as submissive. The inclusion of the Habibs' as villains was unnecessary and extraneous to the movie's plot.

• **"Executive Decision"**
3/96 - Warner Brothers
This Warner Brothers film starring Steven Segal and Kurt Russell is about a group of Arab terrorists hijacking a plane on its way to Washington, D.C. In the film, the Arab Muslims commit criminal acts after performing Muslim prayers and while carrying the Quran and reciting religious verses. After ADC tried to arrange a meeting and a pre-screening of the film for six months, Warner Brothers agreed to meet with ADC and several Muslim organizations, including the American Muslim Council (AMC). At the meeting, Warner Brothers agreed to omit a number of the most offensive scenes from the video version and the international release. Despite these changes, the general message that Arabs and Muslims are bent on committing violence against innocent Americans remains part of the main plot.

• **Kazaam**
9/96 - Touchstone Pictures (Disney subsidiary)
Thi s PG-13 movie starring Shaquille O'Neal was produced by Touchstone Pictures, a subsidiary of Walt Disney. All the villains in the film are Middle Eastern Americans. The main villain, Mr. Malek, is a repulsive, unshaven individual with a devilish laugh, a thick Middle Eastern accent and gluttonous eating habits. Mr. Malek and his two "Arab" evil assistants go as far as killing a 12-year-old boy, who is then brought back to life by a genie. At the end of the movie, the Arab characters are defeated by the boy, his father and the genie. Good triumphs over evil and the Arab villains are thrown into a garbage can. Disney failed to respond to the many letters of protest from Arab Americans across the country.

• ***Disney Adventures Magazine***
7/96 - Walt Disney
Defamation by Disney is not only confined to the big screen. The monthly children's magazine issued by Disney Magazine Publishing, Inc., included a ridiculous, offensive and erroneous statement in a section entitled, "Weird Yet True." The statement read as follows: "Blow Us Away! Wanna greet somebody Arab-style? Grab a friend and blow into his face at the same time he blows into yours! Just don't turn your head to avoid your buddy's breath. Arabs consider that a major insult!" Such a practice is unheard of in the Arab world. The magazine's editors chose not to print ADC's Letter to the Editor and did not print a retraction so that the false information about Arab culture could be corrected for their young readers.

• **"Operation Condor"**
7/18/97 - Miramax (Disney subsidiary)
"Operation Condor," an action flick released by Miramax and its parent corporation, Walt Disney, stars Jackie Chan. The film features Arab villains, who are depicted as violent, unscrupulous,

backward, dumb and money-grubbing people who make regular references to "Allah." John Anderson, who reviewed the movie for *Newsday* wrote: "The abusive types include the film's comedy Arabs, who are about the most cartoonish ethnic stereotypes you're likely to see in a major motion picture". (*Newsday*, 7/18/97)

• **G.I. Jane**
8/97 - Hollywood Pictures (Disney subsidiary)
The film "G.I. Jane," featuring Demi Moore, was released by Hollywood Pictures — a subsidiary of Walt Disney. The film's end sequence features a gratuitous scene in which Demi Moore tries to prove her worth as a Navy Seal by killing scores of faceless, dehumanized Arabs. While the movie addressed the complexities of stereotyping women in combat, it re-enforced the notion of Arabs as 'U.S. enemy #1' with gratuitous Arab-killing scenes which were extraneous to the plot.

2. Television

Television producers have used only two Arab-American characters in the last 50 years. In the 1960's, Danny Thomas affectionately acknowledged his Lebanese heritage in "Make Room for Daddy." The other Arab-American character was Corporal Maxwell Klinger, a soldier in M*A*S*H (1972-83) who wore women's clothing regularly in an attempt to get himself discharged from the army. This TV season, the character of Olive Masseri in "Veronica's Closet" is played by an Arab-American actress, Kathy Najimy, whose character has not yet fully "come out" as an Arab American on the show.

The numerous anti-Arab movies which are brought to theaters nationwide often end up being re-run on television — thus repeatedly disseminating negative images of Arabs to large audiences. At a young age, television images can make lasting impressions of people from other races, ethnicities, religions. American children often see the European-American heroes defeat the 'bad' Arabs on magic carpets in an Arabian Nights setting. The 'good guy' subdues the dark monstrous genies or the corrupt rulers, and liberates the enslaved maidens of a harem in cartoons such as "Bugs Bunny," "Porky Pig," "Richie Rich," "Scooby-Doo," "Popeye," "Plastic Man," "Heckle and Jeckle," "Woody Woodpecker," "the Superfriends," "Daffy Duck," and "Batfink," among others. The full-length feature film "Aladdin" and the video sequel "Return of Jafar" also harp on hackneyed Arab stereotypes.

Arab-American children can not relate to these "Arabian" scenes. If they visit the Middle East, they find that harems are nonexistent, magic carpets are only in storybooks and only one percent of the total Arab population consists of bedouins who live in the desert. They see images of themselves, their people and their culture which do not match the reality around them. When an estimated 25 to 30 television shows per week depict Arabs in a bad light, the task of monitoring the media becomes an arduous, almost impossible, task for Arab-American parents. A long-term solution is for producers and media executives to make conscientious decisions to stop airing programs which denigrate Arabs and Arab Americans — as has been done with other racial and ethnic groups. For instance, "Amos and Andy," a television show which featured racist portrayals of African Americans, has been taken off the air permanently.

The following examples are only a small sample of the anti-Arab images which are run *daily* on American television. Arab stereotypes are rampant and can be found in a shows ranging from re-runs of "Hart to Hart," "All in the Family" and "One Day at a Time" to TNT's new program,

"The New Adventures of Robin Hood."

• **"Daffy Duck," "Batfink," "Porky Pig"**
1996 - Nickelodeon
Over a short period of time, Nickelodeon, a children's cable channel, featured three anti-Arab cartoons. A Daffy Duck cartoon presented a villainous "Arab" duck who dressed in a *keffiyeh*, a Palestinian head covering, and traditional Arab garb. He carried a huge shotgun and set out to kill three cute Mexican mice. A Batfink episode, "Sandman Sam" included a "bad guy" who rode a camel, robbed stores, wore an "Arab" headdress and hid behind palm trees to elude the police. In a Porky Pig cartoon, "Ali Baba Bound," Porky's foe was the "mad dog of the desert," Ali Baba, who planned to attack the fort where Porky took refuge. As Ali Baba and the Arabs charged the fort, one of them attached a missile to his head and blew himself up. Following protests from ADC, Nickelodeon promised to stop airing these anti-Arab cartoons.

• **"Thunder in Paradise"**
1997 - TNT
The TNT cable channel aired "Thunder in Paradise," a made-for-TV movie for the third time. The film includes a harem, Arab villains, Arab men attacking blond women, and other demeaning clichés of Arabs. This movie thus perpetuated the stereotype of the violent, sexually abusive Arab.

• **"Path to Paradise: the Untold Story of the World Trade Center Bombing"**
1997 - HBO
"Path to Paradise," a made-for-TV film based on the events leading up to the World Trade Center bombing, left viewers with the distinct impression that Arabs and Muslims in general are violent terrorists who will continue to attack Americans. One of the film's clear messages was that Arab immigrants are a threat to the United States and are likely to support acts of terrorism. In a dialogue with ADC prior to the film's release, HBO assured Arab-American and Muslim representatives that the film would not promote negative stereotypes and would in fact contain a positive Arab character. Yet, the only Arab who did not partake in the bombing plot was an FBI informant who was portrayed as a lying, sexist sleaze. The film ends with a chilling message suggesting that "more is to come" from "these people." Not once did the film suggest that the overwhelming majority of Arabs and Muslims in the United States condemned the bombing and feared the backlash that it might cause on their communities.

• **"J.A.G.: Judge Advocate General's Corps"**
1997 - CBS
Several episodes of "J.A.G.," a new CBS series, have perpetuated negative images of Arabs and Muslims as backward, violent fanatics and terrorists. In one episode, an Arab colonel held an innocent U.S. army officer hostage and tried to force himself on an attractive blond woman. The rape is thwarted and the Arab colonel is killed in a battle between good and evil. In another episode, a mysterious curse is cast on U.S. air force pilots, causing fatal crashes. The episode takes place in an Arab country and features scenes of Muslims praying in a mosque. The pilots discover that the curse was placed by 'the Muslims.'

• **"Hostage Flight"**
1997 - NBC
This made-for-TV film, whose plot revolves around the hijacking of a plane en route to London by ruthless terrorists, is replete with Arab and Muslim villains. At one point the protagonist in "Hostage Flight" says: "These [Arab Muslim] bastards shot those people in cold blood. They think

it's open season on the Americans." Although the film was made in 1985, it is regularly re-run on NBC.

• **"Under Siege"**
1997 - NBC
In "Under Siege," a film which was re-aired on NBC, Arab terrorists organize headquarters in Dearborn, Michigan, home to the largest Arab-American community in the country. Arab villains carry out terrorist acts and threaten to use nuclear weapons. In one scene, the U.S. Secretary of State tells the ambassador of a Muslim nation: "People in your country are barbarians." Later in the movie, the director of the FBI tells an African-American colleague: "Those people are different from us. It's a whole different ball game.. Those people have their own mentality. They have their own notion of what's right and what's wrong, what's worth living for and dying for." The idea that Arabs and Muslims are barbarians with a deep hatred for Americans sends the message that any attempt to establish understanding or dialogue is futile.

3. Radio Talk Shows

In search for higher ratings and more control over the air waves, radio talk show hosts are generally less accountable and more offensive than television news commentators. Examples of defamation on the radio abound. Yet, one case stands out in this part year.

Radio talk show host Mark Williams of **WGY Radio** (810 AM) in Albany New York, made some horrific, brazenly racist comments against Arab Americans on February 24, 1997. In the wake of the tragic shooting at the Empire State Building by a Palestinian visitor to the United States, Williams called Palestinians "animals. . . people who have not lost their tails yet." He added: "We don't need gun control, we need Palestinian control." He asserted that Arabs and Muslims are not welcome in the United States. "They [the Palestinians] should be watched, possibly deported," he said, adding that "perhaps we should look at legislation to outlaw Islam." Two days later, a 9-year-old Arab-American girl of Palestinian descent called the radio station to complain. Williams insulted her and denigrated her heritage on the air. This time, Williams said that Palestinians should not be allowed to immigrate because " they are tree-swinging savages." The girl replied, "My whole family is Palestinian. I do not know one person in my whole family who would ever think of going and blowing up a bus." Williams then asked the Arab-American girl twice: "Do you walk upright?" Williams never apologized for these comments, even after receiving calls and letters of protest from around the country and after meetings with concerned citizens, including a Rabbi and an Imam.

4. News Reports

At the 1996 ADC National Convention, CNN news anchor Peter Arnett noted that after the Oklahoma City bombing, there was an "initial witch-hunt for possible Arab suspects" that was the result of "bias by the media." He added: "Next time, we won't think that all terrorists are Arabs." Arnett said that the "general public has built the perception that the Arab world is a "dangerous place" because U.S. coverage of the Middle East is "crisis-oriented." News outlets —

television, newspapers, magazines, and radio — seldom cover positive events in the Arab world, instead focusing on violence and conflict. This in turn affects public perceptions of the Arab-American community.

Despite the rush to judgment which followed the Oklahoma City bombing, the crash of TWA Flight 800 in July 1996 was once again blamed on vague 'Middle Eastern terrorists.' While most news outlets cautioned against jumping to conclusions, some proceeded to irresponsibly speculate before all the relevant facts were uncovered. Nightline's Ted Koppel began his July 18, 1996, broadcast with the following words: "Hours before the crash, this threat, in Arabic, was faxed to an Arabic newspaper... Unraveling the disaster of TWA Flight 800. Was it a bomb?" ABC News' Brian Ross reported on July 20, 1996: "FBI agents have been fanning out. FBI agents in New York have been asking about one specific suspected Mideastern Arab terrorist, and one specific Mideastern terrorist group." A CNN news anchor on July 22, 1996, said: "There is a trial underway in New York right now and we're not trying to infer any connection, but three radical Muslims accused of plotting to bomb U.S. airlines are on trial." Despite the disclaimer, the effect of these speculations was to infer connections between the crash and 'Arab terrorists.'

Charles Grodin of CNBC went as far as declaring: "Whose cause is served that you blow up 230 people in the middle of the air? In the name of what religion? What religion puts you closer to what God that you're responsible for blowing up 230 people?" Despite the speculations, investigators have found no definite cause for the crash and have so far indicated that the most likely cause was mechanical failure.

The perpetuation of negative stereotypes in news reporting often has severe and lasting repercussions on the Arab-American community. Indeed, the outcome of unfounded media speculations following both the Oklahoma City bombing and the TWA crash was the adoption of legislations which essentially discriminates against Arab Americans (*See Section V*) .

News coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict often minimizes the loss of Arab lives and portrays Arabs as terrorists, thus reinforcing anti-Arab sentiment among the public. In the reporting of events related to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the term "terrorist" is selectively used when Israelis are victims, but almost never used when Arab civilians are victims of Israeli brutality. Arabs are typically equated with Muslims, who are in turn portrayed as extremists, as discussed in depth in Edward Said's recent book, Covering Islam (Vintage Press, 1997).

Palestinians killed by Israeli settlers or soldiers are typically downplayed, as are civilians in southern Lebanon who are regularly bombed by the Israeli forces occupying the southern portion of that country. The blind spots of the major media were well illustrated by a *New York Times* chart. After a bombing at a U.S. base in Saudi Arabia, the *New York Times (6/27/96)* published a chart headlined "A Trail of Rubble: Mideast and Bombings." The chart only included bombings against Israelis, but did not include any bombings against Arabs. (EXTRA! 9-10/96)

In line with a general tendency to dehumanize Arabs, the media have barely touched upon the devastating effects of the international embargo against Iraq. *The Washington Post* noted in an editorial (10/22/97) that the "barely noticed crisis" in Iraq is the "immense suffering of the Iraqi people" as a result of the sanctions. *The Post* noted that the "annual extra-death toll of perhaps a million people" in Iraq called for an "awareness campaign." Such a campaign is needed only because the media have so far failed to report the massive human suffering of the Iraqi civilian population.

The double-standards and lack of depth typical of U.S. media coverage of the Middle East contribute to anti-Arab sentiments. Discrimination and hate crimes are allowed to thrive in a climate where the word "Arab" generates negative images of terrorism, violence, and extremism. The rich Arab cultural heritage, the positive contributions of the Arab world, and the suffering of the Arab people are simply non-existing in U.S. news coverage. As a result, the American public only sees a narrow vision of the Arabs — that which fits preconceived stereotypes repeatedly perpetuated in the media and popular culture.

5. Education and Textbooks

Despite the widespread ethos of multiculturalism among educators, ADC receives numerous complaints of discriminatory attitudes by teachers, bias in textbooks, and disparate treatment of Arab-American and Muslim students.

Teachers are not immune to the anti-Arab stereotypes perpetuated in the media and popular culture. In fact, few teachers have any formal training in Arab studies, which would enable them to teach about Arab issues with insight and objectivity. Some have fundamentally incorrect ideas, such as a 4th-grade teacher in Richmond, Virginia, who thought that Islam "believed in a lot of gods." Where Arab Americans are a visible ethnic community, there is sometimes a climate of anti-immigrant nativism and hostility which affects the schools. In addition, Arab Americans are often overlooked in multicultural programs because they are not a recognized ethnic minority.

Ignorance about the Arab world and insensitivity to Arab Americans sometimes translate into outright racism. In a particularly notorious incident, a member of the South Carolina Board of Education made bigoted remarks during a school board meeting, dismissing possible objections to his efforts to have the Ten Commandments displayed in schools: "Screw the Buddhists and kill the Muslims...And put that in the minutes. What I want is to promote Christianity as the only true religion. This nation was founded to worship, honor and glorify Jesus Christ, not Mohammed, not Buddha." Public outcry forced him to apologize, but officials resisted calls for his resignation.

Arab-American educators in Dearborn, Michigan, the home of the largest Arab-American community in the country, report widespread anti-Arab attitudes in the community and the schools. A major issue has been the school system's rejection of a federal grant for bilingual education, which would mainly benefit Arab Americans. Some in the community blame Arab Americans for "lowering the test scores" of Dearborn students and insist on an "English-only" policy.

Instances of biased curricula and discriminatory attitudes by teachers can be found at a variety of levels within the educational system. An Arab-American parent in Colorado recently complained about remarks by a junior high school teacher who told students: "It's a good thing the Moors didn't win or France wouldn't be what it is today...The Palestinians were very stupid to leave their homes in 1948." Subsequently, the teacher invited the parent to speak to the class, but resisted inviting an ADC representative: "He has an accent...It might be hard for students to understand... I'm concerned there might be objections from Jewish parents." An Arab-American father in Cape May, New Jersey, complained to the Board of Education that, following bombings in Israel, his daughter's 6th-grade teacher asked: "Do you have in your blood some sense to kill people?" A junior high teacher in Dallas told a student who was littering: "Pick up that trash or

I'll burn your tent and kill your camel."

As a result of such incidents, Arab-American students sometimes go as far as hiding their ethnic identity in order to be accepted by their teachers and classmates. A 4th-grade Arab-American student in Summers Point, New Jersey, was humiliated when his teacher made a "joking" remark that "Muslims are those guys who strap a bomb to themselves and blow up women and children, along with themselves." After hearing this "joke," the student did not want anyone to know that he was an Arab or Muslim. A 2nd-grade Arab-American boy in Florida refused to tell his teachers and peers his last name because other children would laugh at him.

Negative attitudes among teachers can only reinforce anti-Arab sentiment among non-Arab students. At a high school in south Chicago, there were almost "daily incidents" of ethnic friction, fights and name-calling between Arab-American and "white" students. In Berkeley, California, high school students placed bigoted captions under their school pictures, such as: "I'm going out to kill me a bunch of Arabs." Students at Bates College protested a language requirement by posting a flier stating: "How would you like to be bound and gagged, tied to a tree, held at gunpoint, and forced to learn Arabic?"

Although not bound and gagged, many students sit in their classrooms forced to learn lessons destructive to their development as active members of a multicultural society. This is particularly the case when problems exist on an institutional level. The controversial new Virginia world history guidelines overemphasize conflict, antagonism and difference in the relationship between the West and the Arab world. Arab-American educators identified biases in the New York state social studies syllabi favoring a pro-Israeli outlook on the Arab-Isareli conflict. One lesson, for example, recommends the pro-Zionist film, "Israel: Making of a Modern Nation," while recommending resources presenting Arabs as backward "desert nomads."

Bias and inaccuracies also abound in textbooks and other educational resources. Creative Publications' book, Middle School Math with Pizazz, asks with would-be humor: "What do you get when you cross a cow with an Arab?" The demeaning answer is: "A milk sheik." Open Court/McGraw Hill publishers reinforced camel-desert-bedouin stereotypes in their children's story, "The Camel's Nose," in which a camel gradually edges an Arab out of his own tent. The Middle East Studies Association surveyed 80 history and geography textbooks and found numerous errors of fact and interpretation, whereby discussion of the Arab-Israeli conflict was often biased in favor of Israel, and the presentation of Islam was marred by serious distortion (Elizabeth Barlow, ed., Evaluation of Secondary-Level Textbooks for Coverage of the Middle East and North Africa, Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Middle East and North African Studies, 1994). The cover of a 1996-97 video catalogue for teachers featured a Palestinian boy wearing a *keffiyeh* to illustrate a video series on domestic and international terrorism. Although the films themselves presented a balanced approach to the issue, the image used to market the series sent the message that the 'typical' terrorist is a young Palestinian male.

Problems arise even where there is a serious institutional commitment to multiculturalism. In Fairfax County, Virginia, the school system initiated a year-long, half-million dollar program to train 300 top school officials in "managing cultural diversity." Yet, some educators failed to get the message. The marketing department at one high school organized a professional wrestling match as a fundraising event, which included wrestlers using cultural stereotypes in their professional personas — the "Iron Sheik" as the villain, an Italian mafia character, and a "Midget Match." The event was canceled after protests from ADC and various minority groups.

In some instances, Arab Americans have been able to sensitize educators, provide classroom presentations, make changes in curricula, and take other corrective measures. In other cases, however, the problems remain unresolved. The challenge for educators is to include Arab Americans in their multicultural perspective and to teach about Arab culture and Islam as an integral part of world civilization.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

As the White House 'Initiative on Race' proceeds, the need to address the problem of anti-Arab discrimination and hate crimes is imperative due to the scope and pervasiveness of the problem. ***ADC's most fundamental recommendation is that Arab Americans be consciously and systematically included in all federal programs regarding hate crimes, discrimination, diversity or multiculturalism.*** Arab Americans are not officially recognized as a protected minority. Nor is there an Arab-American category in the federal system of racial and ethnic classifications which is employed by the Census and other agencies. As a result, no adequate data on anti-Arab hate crimes is collected and Arab Americans too often remain excluded from diversity programs.

We urge the adoption of the following steps:

- The Justice Department and the FBI should systematically collect data on anti-Arab hate crimes. This should include the creation of an "Arab-American" ethnic category for victims, the collection of data on the ethnicity of suspects/arrestee, and an "anti-Arab bias motivation" category to be included on the Hate Crime Incident Report form used by law enforcement officials and authorized by the Hate Crimes Statistics Act of 1990. The FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Handbook should explicitly instruct law enforcement officials to collect ethnic data on victims and offenders/suspects/arrestees in hate crime cases. This data should not be "optional," nor restricted to the existing ethnic categories of "Hispanic" and "Other."

- Justice Department and FBI community outreach programs and public education programs should include materials on Arab Americans and anti-Arab discrimination. Arab-American civil rights organizations should be invited to take part in these programs. A lesson plan on anti-Arab hate crimes should be included in Justice Department and FBI training units for law enforcement personnel.

- Federal agencies should include instruction about Arab Americans and Arab culture in all diversity training and cultural sensitivity programs carried out within Federal agencies.

- The Department of Education should hold state and local school officials accountable for discriminatory actions and policies in all school systems receiving federal funds. The Department should also encourage state and local school systems to conduct courses, classes and programs about discrimination and hate crimes. Materials prepared for such programs should consciously and systematically include attention to anti-Arab bigotry.

- The Federal Communications Commission should more seriously enforce the legally-required public interest obligations of radio and television broadcasters. Without undermining the First Amendment, the FCC should examine whether stations broadcasting bigotry, hate speech and incitement to violence are the most worthy holders of the limited number of broadcast licenses.

- The educational materials and training programs mentionned above should be prepared in consultation with the Arab-American community.

NOTES

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American-Arab
Anti-Discrimination Committee

4201 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: (202) 244-2990
Fax: (202) 244-3196
E-mail: adc@adc.org
http://www.adc.org